RIDING THE HOT NEW YAMAHAS

CYCLE GUIDE

MILLION-DOLLAR TOURING:
Travels with Malcolm

TESTS: Kawasaki Ninja 1000R, Harley-Davidson FLTC, Kawasaki KX125

JANUARY 1986
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HARLEY'S FLTC:
Good as Gold?

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DO.

enormous amounts of research and development time. Each one representing a giant leap forward in motorcycle performance.

And yet, the design criteria for the GSX-Rs was surprisingly simple. If a part could be made lighter, we made it lighter. If it could be made stronger and simpler, we made it stronger and simpler.

The result? How about an advanced new cooling system that's not only far more efficient than conventional air cooling, but weighs far less than water cooling. Or an 1100cc engine that weighs just 180 pounds. Or a computer-designed aluminum 750 frame that actually weighs *less than 18 pounds.*

All this is just part of what makes the Suzuki GSX-Rs the quickest, most agile pure-function hyperbikes ever built. And it's why we still maintain that to win races and set new records, you really *do* need exotic factory works bikes.

It's just that ours can be ridden on the street.

Exotic alloys such as magnesium are used whenever possible to keep weight to the bare minimum.

MAN AND MACHINE SUZUKI® WORK LIKE A SINGLE MOVING PART.

Suzuki's acclaimed Full Floater rear suspension system yields uncanny control, yet weighs surprisingly little.

Another first on a production sport machine is the use of 130+ mph V-rated radial tires front and rear.

Be safe. Always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective riding apparel. For riding courses call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-447-4700.

YOU

If we told you that Suzuki won both 1st and 2nd Place in The 24 Hours of LeMans, you probably wouldn't be too shocked.

GSX-R

After all, what else would you expect from a company whose factory works bikes have won no fewer than 32 World Championships?

You'd expect machines with awesome power. Like a 750 that pumps out around 100 horsepower, yet weighs less than most 450s. Or a 130-horsepower 1100 that's light enough to make most 750s seem overweight.

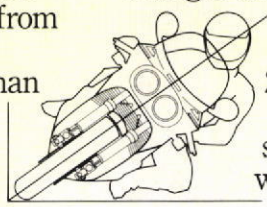
But what if we told you that we took those same winning racers and made them street legal? Well, that's exactly what we've done, and we call them the GSX-Rs. They're not just replicas of race machines, they *are* race machines.

How else can you explain a 750 that—straight out of the shipping crate—allowed the editors of Cycle World to set 12 new speed records, including a new 24-hour endurance record?

How else could a completely stock 750cc motorcycle bump the world's 24-hour endurance record for any size motorcycle up from 117mph to an unbelievable 128mph?

The simple fact is, what we've created is a pair of the world's fastest, lightest and most agile hyperbikes ever produced. The Suzuki GSX-R750 and 1100:

Each machine a product of



The GSX-R750's incredible 55-degree lean angle gives it handling characteristics like a race bike. Perhaps that's because it is a race bike.

Suzuki's Advanced Cooling System (SACS) is far more efficient than air cooling, yet far lighter and simpler than water cooling.

The box-section aluminum GP-type frame is computer designed to resist flexing even under grueling race conditions.

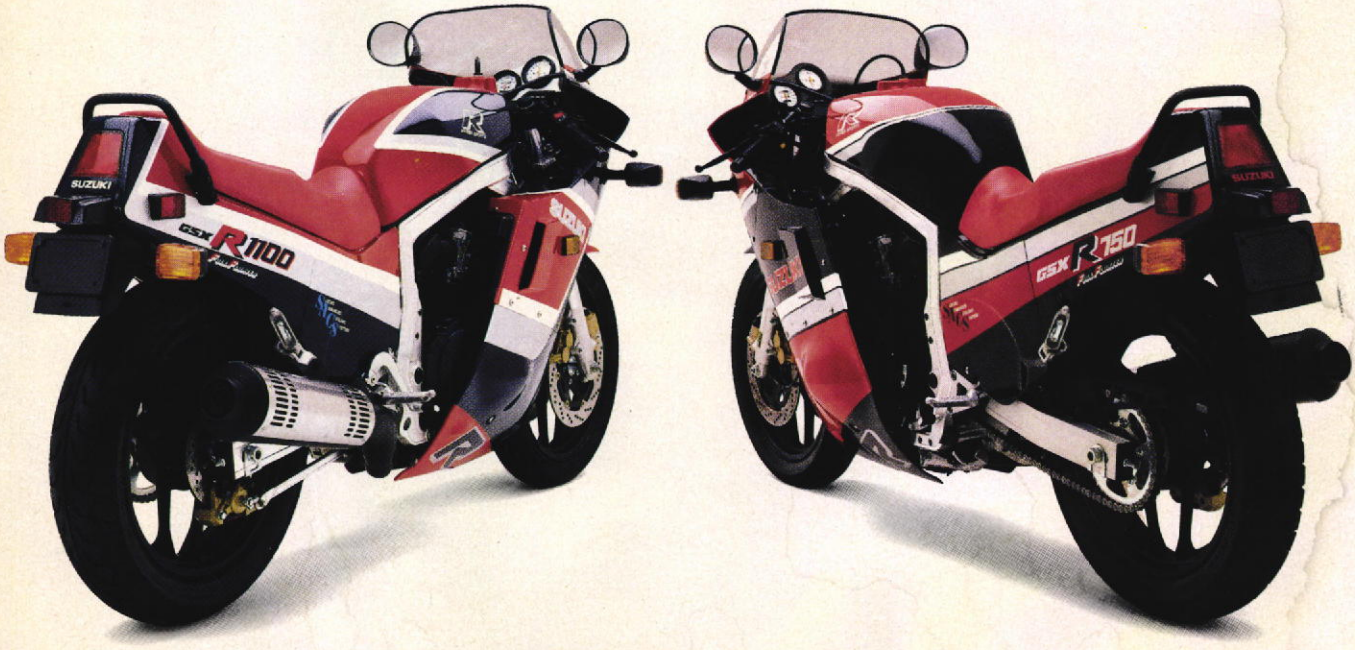
Major engine components are computer-designed to be exceptionally light in weight, yet high in tensile strength.

Both the GSX-R750 and 1100 have advanced anti-dive systems for quick response and improved brake feel. The 750's system is hydraulically-activated, while the 1100's anti-dive is operated electrically.

TO WIN THE 24 HOURS OF LEMANS AND SET A NEW 24 HOUR ENDURANCE RECORD YOU'D THINK YOU'D NEED AN EXOTIC WORKS BIKE.

	GSX-R750	GSX-R1100
ENGINE		
Type	*Four Stroke, Four Cylinder, Air Cooled, with SACS (Suzuki Advanced Cooling System) and TSCC (Twin Swirl Combustion Chambers)*	*Four Stroke, Four Cylinder, Air Cooled, with SACS (Suzuki Advanced Cooling System) and TSCC (Twin Swirl Combustion Chambers)*
Bore x Stroke	*70 x 48.7mm*	*76 x 58mm*
Piston Displacement	*749cc*	*1052cc*
Compression Ratio	*10.6:1*	*10.0:1*
Carburetion	*4, Mikuni BST31SS*	*4, Mikuni BST33SS*
Starter System	*Electric*	*Electric*
Lubrication System	*Wet Sump*	*Wet Sump*
TRANSMISSION		
Type	*6-speed, Constant Mesh*	*5-speed, Constant Mesh*
Clutch	*Wet, Multi-Plate, Hydraulic*	*Wet, Multi-Plate, Hydraulic*
CHASSIS		
Frame Type	*Aluminum, Box Section*	*Aluminum, Box Section*
Front Fork	*Posi Damp Fork System, Oil Damped, 4-Way Spring Preload Adjustment*	*Electrically-Activated Suspension System, Oil Damped, 4-Way Spring Preload Adjustment*
Rear Suspension	*Suzuki Full Floater Suspension System with Adjustable Spring Preload and 4-Way Adjustable Damping*	*Suzuki Full Floater Suspension System with Adjustable Spring Preload and 4-Way Adjustable Damping*
Swingarm	*Aluminum Box-Type*	*Aluminum Box-Type*
Brakes (Front)	*Dual Hydraulic Discs*	*Dual Hydraulic Discs*
Brakes (Rear)	*Single Hydraulic Disc*	*Single Hydraulic Disc*
Tire (Front)	*110/80VR18 V240*	*110/80VR18 V260*
Tire (Rear)	*140/70VR18 V240*	*140/70VR18 V260*
WEIGHTS & DIMENSIONS		
Dry Weight	*388 lbs (Calif=390 lbs.)*	*434 lbs (Calif=437 lbs.)*
Wheelbase	*57.3 in*	*57.5 in*
Seat Height	*31.3 in*	*31.3 in*
Colors	*Black & Red or Blue & White*	*Blue & White or Blue & Red*

All specifications subject to change without notice.



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QUOTE: "To all pilots. After the arrival line, it is forbidden to invert the way. It is so compulsory to make a slower lap and to enter regularly the box." —Pg. 65

ON THE COVER: With its brightwork glistening in the California sunshine, Harley's FLTC rumbles down a path that no other big-rig chooses to take. Marcel Fortney came along for the ride, and David Dewhurst caught the image just before Harley and Co. disappeared around the next curve, destination unknown.

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CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Cagiva WMX 250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am 320 Trials-'84	October '84	Trials	Two-stroke	4.8/4.5	205	25.5/3.00	6
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda ATC350X-'85	September '85	ATV	Four-stroke	8.0/7.0	324	23.0/1.4	6
Honda FourTrax 4x4-'86	Nov./Dec. '85	ATV	Four-stroke	4.1/4.6	570	3.0$s0.5	5
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'84	August '84	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.9/9.6	235	26.0/4.13	6
Honda XR600R-'85	October '85	Desert	Four-stroke	10.9/11.4	284	28.0/4.65	5
Husqvarna 250WRX-'85	August '85	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	239	27.0/4.72	6
Husqvarna 400WR-'84	July '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.2	242	28.5/5.16	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'85	April '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.9	235	27.0/4.72	4
Husqvarna 510TE-'85	March '85	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.6/11.9	263	28.5/5.16	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.9	214	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX125-'86	January '86	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.6	201	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
M-Star 250 Supercross-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.7	230	27.0/4.72	5
Suzuki Quadracer 250-'85	May '85	ATV	Two-stroke	7.2/8.1	326	N/A	5
Suzuki Quadrunner 250-'84	October '84	ATV	Four-stroke	1.0/N/A	384	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'85	May '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.4/11.8	202	29.0/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Yamaha BW200-'85	April '85	Trail	Four-stroke	6.3/6.6	249	27.3/3.46	5
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha TT600-'85	October '85	Trail	Four-stroke	11.3/10.7	283	28.0/4.65	5
Yamaha TY350-'85	July '85	Trials	Two-stroke	6.5/4.8	193	23.0/1.93	6
Yamaha XT250-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.7/7.9	266	28.3/4.60	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'85	June '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.3	219	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW K100RS-'84	October '84	4I/G	987.2	12.381/109.48	133	532	39–54	139
BMW R80-'85	September '85	2C/G	782.5	13.357/98.36	114	439	37–52	148
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'86	January '86	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.378/90.00	107	748	31–49	141
H-D FXRS Low Rider Sport-'86	Nov./Dec. '85	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	13.654/96.25	115	592	31–50	132
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D XLH 883 Sportster-'86	September '85	45 deg. 2D/F	882.9	14.045/92.40	106	467	37–67	131
H-D XLH Sportster-'85	February '85	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.742/95.94	111	490	43–58	146
Honda Gold Wing Ltd Ed.-'85	March '85	4C/G	1181.9	13.346/98.36	113	810	37–45	134
Honda NS250R-'85	May '85	90 deg. 2D/F††	249.3	13.091/101.58	121	339	27–38	135
Honda NS400R-'85	October '85	90 deg. 3D/F††	387.4	12.324/108.69	125	392	25–45	135
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700C Magna-'85	August '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.390/108.82	128	520	34–47	131
Honda VF700F Interceptor-'84	October '84	90 deg. 4D/F	698.9	12.323/106.50	124	512	37–48	136
Honda VF700S Sabre-'85	January '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.358/109.09	121	514	28–48	136
Honda VF1000R-'85	July '85	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.308/121.78	149	578	20–42	135
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	June '85	45 deg. 2D/G	1099.2	13.022/100.33	112	560	33–44	127
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki 454 LTD-'85	September '85	2A/H	454.1	13.386/97.08	102	427	37–53	125
Kawasaki GPz550-'85	March '85	4A/F	553.8	12.478/104.89	121	432	44–54	137
Kawasaki GPz750 turbo-'85	Nov./Dec. '85	4A/F	739.0	11.441/118.89	141	532	40–54	135
Kawasaki Eliminator-'85	April '85	4A/G	908.2	11.405/117.49	134	569	22–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	March '85	4A/F	592.6	12.124/109.09	135	448	40–48	135
Kawasaki Ninja-'85	August '85	4A/F	908.2	11.175/123.79	151	535	32–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 1000R-'86	January '86	4A/F	997.8	10.994/125.69	162	564	33–44	118
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	May '85	4A/F	572.3	12.551/106.50	119	447	33–48	133
Suzuki GS700E-'85	January '85	4A/F	699.5	11.978/112.21	125	485	27–53	140
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	June '85	4A/F	1135.4	11.032/121.78	146	529	30–55	138
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.364/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX-'85	August '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1360.4	12.881/101.12	115	806	24–49	155
Suzuki RG500 Gamma-'85	October '85	Square-Four/F††	498.5	11.991/113.20	N/A	374	22–42	134
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	July '85	2D/G	699.7	12.998/101.01	112	442	44–63	132
Yamaha FJ1100-'85	April '85	4A/F	1097.6	11.002/123.28	147	543	30–47	138
Yamaha FZ750-'85	June '85	45 deg. 4A/F	749.6	11.317/118.57	140	485	31–50	129
Yamaha Maxim X-'85	May '85	4A/G	697.3	11.779/113.63	121	505	25–47	135
Yamaha RZ350-'84	July '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.529/97.61	111	357	26–53	122
Yamaha RZV500R-'84	October '85	4D/F††	499.7	12.409/07.52	134	422	25–53	147
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137
Yamaha V-Max-'85	May '85	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	10.922/127.47	151	596	23–32	137
Yamaha XV1000 Virago-'85	October '85	75 deg. 2D/G	981.0	12.993/101.59	111	507	33–47	132

*__A__-Transverse, __B__-Vertical (single-cylinder only), __C__-Horizontally Opposed, __D__-Tandem Vee, __E__-Transverse Vee, __F__-Chain Final Drive, __G__-Shaft Final Drive, __H__-Belt Final Drive, __I__-Horizontal Longitudinal; † indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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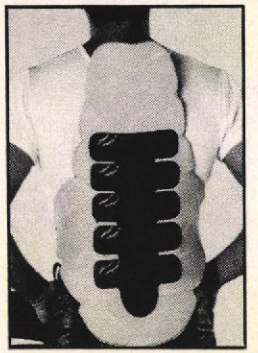

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Setting It Right

Less Is More

More or less.

• One of the most compelling and arcane subjects in motorcycle criticism is the manufacturers' capacity to recognize when they have done something badly. And within that subject, one of the more revealing studies is the readiness of such manufacturers to *admit* that they have done something badly, which is quite another matter.

One learns as a critic—as a communicative intermediary between manufacturer and public—not to pay heed to the claims of blameless innocence with which manufacturers' public relations mouthpieces cloud the issue of faulty work by their masters. One would as soon hang a dog on the evidence of Cyrano de Bergerac, as believe a public relations man defending a bad bike.

Tell a PR man that his product vibrates, and he will tell you in all sincerity (or as much of it as he can muster) that it does not vibrate. The engineer who designed it told him that it would not, could not, vibrate, and who should know better than he? Officially, the bike is as smooth as a slip-gauge. Unofficially, the firm is busily altering the footrest hangers and next year will incorporate those clever counterbalancing shafts that Porsche thought up for its 944 car engine—but breathe not a word, lest Setright be punished by something between crucifixion and ostracism.

If, by the way, you actually believe that Porsche invented those balancer shafts, you might as well go hang that dog; they really were devised by that genius of the motor industry, Dr. Frederick Lanchester, at the end of the 19th century. Doubtless his balancer shafts would have caught on a good deal better had he not also devised an engine so perfectly balanced that it needed no such ancillaries. People did not buy that either: They *liked* a touch of roughness, for it seemed eloquent of power.

There is a lesson there. People being what they are, and the public being what it is, the critic need not feel unduly protective of them. People moan and find something shocking about the faint tingling of an inline four, and no sooner does one start feeling sorry for them than they go and trade it for some bestially iambic vee-twin. On balance—and especially on the subject of imbalance—public relations men are not much worse than most people; the only difference is that, being professionals, they tell their lies early rather than late. Like kindergarten teachers, they thus stand a better chance of being believed.

ILLUSTRATION © 1986 JOE SAPUTO

The mature and judicious who distinguish themselves by reading this journal (this page, with any luck) will not need to be warned of such inexactitudes of terminology. They did not believe that Chrysler invented the hemispherical combustion chamber; they do not believe that Porsche invented the harmonic balancer; and they had better not believe that it was BMW which invented the layout of its K-series motorcycles. It was I.

The adoption by the Munchen-Spandau axis of my idea does not flatter me: The baneful effect of *Bayerische Motoren Werke* was for them to get it all wrong. On the K100 I was all too aware of this misprision; but I have just ridden the new K75, so sweet a machine that if I did not know what lay inside it I would have thought they had done better than I ever intended. On the evidence of such inline threes as I have encountered before, one could hardly have expected this new BMW to be so much nicer than the four from which it was derived; so history is not to be believed, either.

Consider, the conical couple of an even-firing inline three; if you try to draw its vectors, it emerges in two senses and three planes a diabolic couple. The only proper way to resolve it is by building another three in mirror-image symmetry behind it, thus creating the inline six which is so much nicer than any engine not invented by Lanchester. Consider the vibratory Triumph and BSA triples of late and little lamented memory; consider also the ungainly dance of the Jota, in which Laverda despaired of success and eventually lumbered it with a single-plane crankshaft displaying a sad affinity with Wodehouse's "Man With Two Left Feet." What hope, then, had BMW of doing any better?

You never can tell, where motorcycles are concerned. The K75 reminds me only of the virtues of the three, which are many and musical. As a result it has little in common with the K100, and much less in common with any other motorcycle at all. It is not a sportbike and not a tourer, neither is it a short-winded errand-runner nor a short-fashioned pseudo-racer; free from all those limitations and impostures, it is simply a very pleasant motorcycle.

The K75 might prove to have its own limitations, though. I rode the bike in an area centered around Hever Castle, in a part of Kent riddled with pretty little roads and villages and precious little else. On a damp and blustery day, such patchy roads sufficed to show that the bike was a shockproof rider, a light and blameless steerer, a good sticker (on Pirelli Phantoms), a moderate braker and a most exceptionally flexible puller. And despite having the same steering geometry as the K100, the K75 did not have the low-speed topple of that heavier bike. But would it get better and better, like the big one, as it went faster and faster? I could not tell: On those roads I had to stick my neck out somewhat to manage a mere 90 mph.

Yet I risked sticking it out further when I returned. Were the roads chosen, I asked, to mask some tendency to weave or wobble at high speeds? Certainly not, retorted the BMW people, predictable as ever: Police activity on the freeways a little further afield made high-speed testing a source of probable trouble and certain embarrassment, but the K75 would steer impeccably up to its 120+ maximum, they said. Of course.

There will be time to find the answer. At present the K75 only comes in an almost unfaired form, and only the strong in body and weak in brain would want to ride a naked motorcycle at 120 mph for long. Springtime, when the K75 is destined to reach the United States, will bring an S version. Then, and on that, I hope to pursue further enquiries; meanwhile, I believe the K75 is good.

—L.J.K. Setright

Voice From The Wilderness

Break A Leg

Old motorcyclists never say die.

• This probably dates me, but one of the significant technological breakthroughs of my formative years was the Dymo label machine. Remember? Those gidgies with the plastic tape and alphabetical wheel so you could punch out official-looking labels for prosaic stuff.

"Toaster." It melted and stuck to the side. I could still tell what it was, though. My favorite was the one I stuck on the garage door: "Misc."

People did a lot of dumb things with them, including a couple of interesting treatments I saw on motorcycles. One in particular was stuck across the tank of a Moto Guzzi Le Mans I lifted off a German lawyer from Phoenix. I wondered why anyone in his right mind would part with a Le Mans with just 2300 miles on it for $2400, U.S., until I saw the stick-um slogan on the tank. It was written in German, which is Deutsch to me, so I asked him what it meant and he said, "Be not forgetting your mortality."

He had no business on a motorcycle in the first place. I took the sticker off as soon as I got the bike out of sight. Bad juju.

Preoccupation with the downside not only takes the poop out of life, it has a way of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. A rider is a fool, however, to pretend there is no converse to our adrenaline-high world of two lanes, 45 degree horizons, scuffed toes and sparks twinkling off footpegs in the twilight. And it's true for everyone. Every time you lace up your Nikes to hit the jog path, there lurks the specter of The Stubbed Toe.

It has been the custom of enthusiast publications to look the other way, or deal with the possibility of disaster in upbeat terms bordering on bravado. No guts, no glory. That sort of thing. All of which is fine as far as it goes. It just doesn't go all the way to the truth. I'll tell you the truth: You can stub your toe on a motorcycle. I know; I stubbed my whole body. I'm one of those people much of the motorcycle industry would just as lief went away and shut up. I am a gimp, by my own etymology, what medical science prefers to call a paraplegic. I got this way off the high side of a Ducati, in an off-camber sweeper, in the woods, in a cold, wet October, four years ago, on the way to the Aspencade in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

This was no fluke, of the sort that makes so many gimps bitter, Why-me-Lord? human husks. I worked hard to get this way and deserve all the credit. I'd been doing the backroads for a few years, I'd roadraced with fair success and generally got a hell of a lot of life out of motorcycles—and on the day in question I was getting a good return on my investment in the Duck. I was on Pat Palmer's rear wheel, slightly outside his line, and hit the slick stripe where the pickup trucks deposit their blow-by.

ILLUSTRATION © 1986 JOE SAPUTO

Adios pavement; hello pine tree, at an honest 115. Since then I have heard a lot of the usual about how it's a wonder I lived, and how I must probably hate motorcycles, how I'm a credit to my race, and more of that type of heifer dust until I'm weary of trying to set people straight. There's nothing especially praiseworthy about being a gimp. The fact I survived does of course put me up there with John Wayne. But as to hating bikes . . .

Don't be silly. How could you hate something that pumps all that adrenaline through your blood? Adrenaline is the thinking person's drug-of-choice, and it's perfectly legal. I want some more of the stuff, and toward that end I'm putting together a BMW sidehack with hand controls. Something so I don't have to put my foot down at stoplights. It's a simple conversion, the wheelchair fits between the bike and the sidecar, and bingo! On the road again.

I relate all this to you, not by way of eliciting any emotion, pro or con, but rather to establish credentials, get acquainted, like that. So when I hearken back to the days of kickstarters and torquey twins, you won't be left wondering if the staff here woke up Rip Van Winkle and asked him to write the Old Testament of the Gospel of Motor Scooters. The last leaner I rode was a Ducati 900 Desmo SS, something of a relic even in 1981, but a damnably potent weapon nonetheless. A lot has happened in the world of two wheels since then, but a lot has stayed the same, too. People—in our case, motorcycle people—haven't changed, and they won't. And the road is the same, too. Whether it's the stoplight GP, cruising drive-ins, Interstates coast to coast, or two-lane backwoods blacktop, the experience of the road, and winter in your face, and lying around the campfire at the end of the day's ride are timeless.

There are three parts to the motorcycling equation: man, machine and macadam. Only the machine is subject to significant development, and even at that, motorcyclists tend to bring their history along into the future with them, in the form of two- and three-wheeled designs that simply never outlive their usefulness. So look to those skinny, jockey-looking fellers in the Technicolor leathers for the up-to-the-tick poop on the bike of the week. Look to me for truth and lies about a boy and his pet road.

Of course there's always the possibility the folks at Honda R&D might spend a weekend toying with the problem of rewiring spinal cords in guys like me, whose northern and southern hemispheres have quit speaking to one another. I figure if they can master the mysteries of Mile flattracking in a few short seasons, getting me on my hind legs again should take no more than two days. And then I'd walk right into the nearest showroom and try on one of those Interceptors.

Failing that, I've got this swell idea for a set of servo-assisted training wheels, mounted to the back of a normal bike. They'd be speed-actuated, see, and tuck away once the bike was rolling. At rest, or when the speed dropped to the point where gyroscopic stability won't keep you upright, these helper wheels on hydraulic outriggers drop down and. . . .

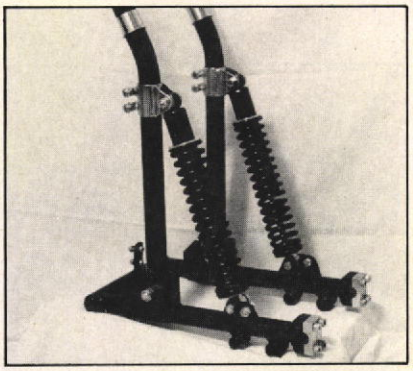
Reckon I can get a patent on it?

—Jeff Smith

Motomart

New year, nifty gear.

Double Time: It's impractical—and uncomfortable—to wear two jackets at the same time. But you won't have to with the nylon/leather Cadet jacket from Hein Gericke. The Cordura nylon jacket features padded leather in strategic areas—shoulder, arms, elbows and kidney area—with tapered, zippered sleeves, adjustable collar closure and elasticized side panels. Suggested retail is $99.99. Quick march to your nearest Hein Gericke dealer or contact FWI, Dept. CG, 201 W. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton, California 92635.



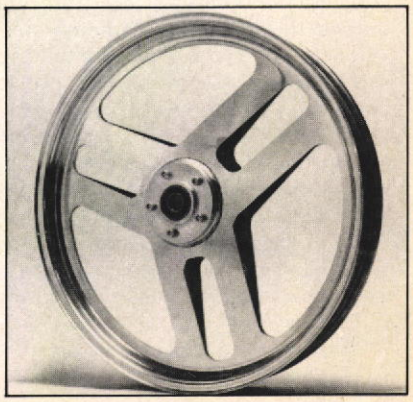
Missing Link: An ATV isn't the only way to have fun on three wheels, as any sidecar enthusiast will tell you. And after you've bolted up your sidecar, you can complete the conversion of your motorcycle to a sidehack with this leading link fork from The Sidecar Shoppe. The fork uses sealed bearings in the link pivots and comes with adjustable Falcon shocks. Available for more than 40 models of modern and vintage bikes, suggested retail prices start at $525 from The Sidecar Shoppe, Dept. CG, 2580 Rogue River Drive, Sacramento, California 95826.

Get Blitzed: There are supersticky tires for canyon crazies and long-wearing tires for long-haul tourers, but boulevardiers have had to do without—until now. Continental claims its Blitz is designed exclusively for cruiser motorcycles, with a rayon carcass for ride comfort and deep tread for maximum mileage. Available in front and rear patterns, suggested retail prices start at $66 for fronts and $80.73 for rears. For more info, contact Continental Products Corp., Dept. CG, 1200 Wall St. W., Lyndhurst, New Jersey 07071.

Fill It and Forget It: Out of sight, out of mind is especially true of motorcycle batteries, one of the most vital—yet neglected—parts of most bikes. But now Yuasa has a battery that thrives on neglect. Yuasa claims its GRT battery is virtually maintenance-free, with a special design that eliminates water loss, allowing the battery to be permanently sealed after its initial acid fill-up. Prices for the GRT start at $64, and to learn more, contact Yuasa-General Battery Corp., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 1262, Reading, Pennsylvania 19603.

Call for a Backup: Although your leathers might be dirty and sweaty enough to stand up on their own, they're still not stiff enough to protect your spine in case of a spill. For extra protection, try the SPL back pad, which can be worn under leathers or street clothes. The foam pad covers the back and lower spine, and the waistband is adjustable elastic. Weighing only 19 ounces, the SPL has a suggested retail of $45 from Quadrifoglio, Dept. CG, 5745 N. 11th St., Phoenix, Arizona 85014.

Wheel Spun: Wheels are made to spin, and the lighter they are the better. In consideration of that, Performance Machine offers the Mitchell spun-aluminum Chicane wheel, which PM claims offers a weight savings of up to 14 pounds over stock wheels. Furthermore, Chicane wheels are designed to accept your motorcycle's stock wheel bearings, disc-brake hardware and sprocket. Front wheels start at $370 and rears at $470 from Performance Machine Inc., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 927, Paramount, California 90723.



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PEOPLE AREN'T BORN WI
BMW'S. THEY DEVELOP

Most motorcycles are purchased after a ten-minute test ride.

Most BMW's are purchased after a test ride that's lasted for years. And probably began on some entirely different brand of bike.

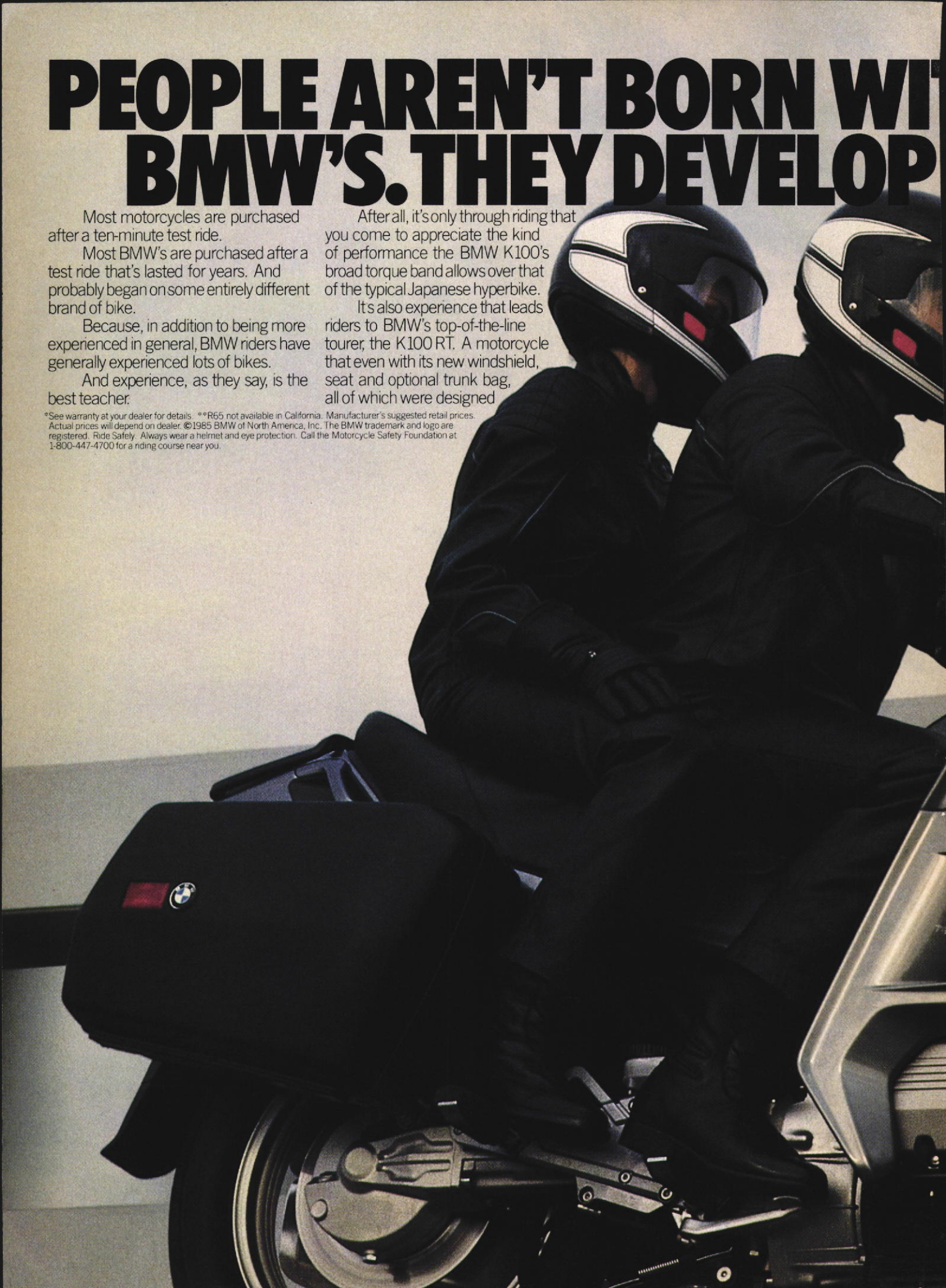
Because, in addition to being more experienced in general, BMW riders have generally experienced lots of bikes.

And experience, as they say, is the best teacher.

After all, it's only through riding that you come to appreciate the kind of performance the BMW K100's broad torque band allows over that of the typical Japanese hyperbike.

It's also experience that leads riders to BMW's top-of-the-line tourer, the K100 RT. A motorcycle that even with its new windshield, seat and optional trunk bag, all of which were designed

*See warranty at your dealer for details. **R65 not available in California. Manufacturer's suggested retail prices. Actual prices will depend on dealer. ©1985 BMW of North America, Inc. The BMW trademark and logo are registered. Ride Safely. Always wear a helmet and eye protection. Call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-447-4700 for a riding course near you.



TH AN APPRECIATION FOR T RIDING OTHER BIKES.

especially for American riders, still weighs far less than any of its competitors, one of which someone once described as "a rolling accessory display."

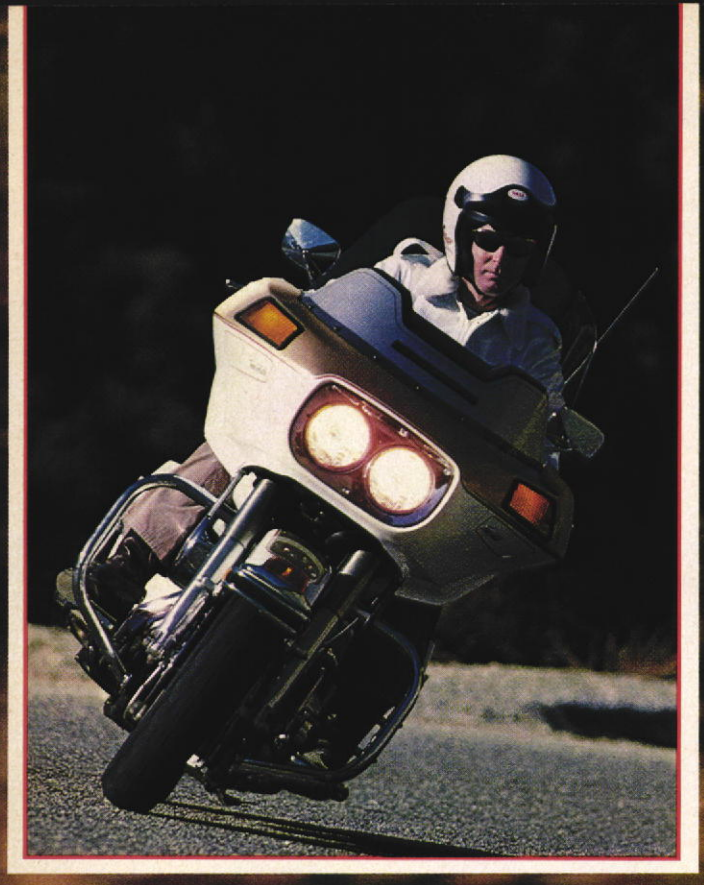
And trial and error is how most riders come to the conclusion that any bike worthy of BMW's 3-year, unlimited mileage warranty,* the industry's longest, is bound to be less of a trial.

Curiously though, whereas experienced buyers usually pay less for their purchases, BMW buyers seem happy to pay a little more, from $3,800 for the R65 to $7,650 for the K100 RT.**

But then, most of these riders are planning on keeping their BMW motorcycles for a long time. And as one writer for Cycle magazine put it, "What's six grand when you're talking about long-term compatibility?" Especially with BMW factory financing and leasing readily available.

But, of course, the best way to appreciate all of this is to visit your BMW dealer for a thorough test ride. A test only years of riding can prepare you for.

THE LEGENDARY MOTORCYCLES OF GERMANY.

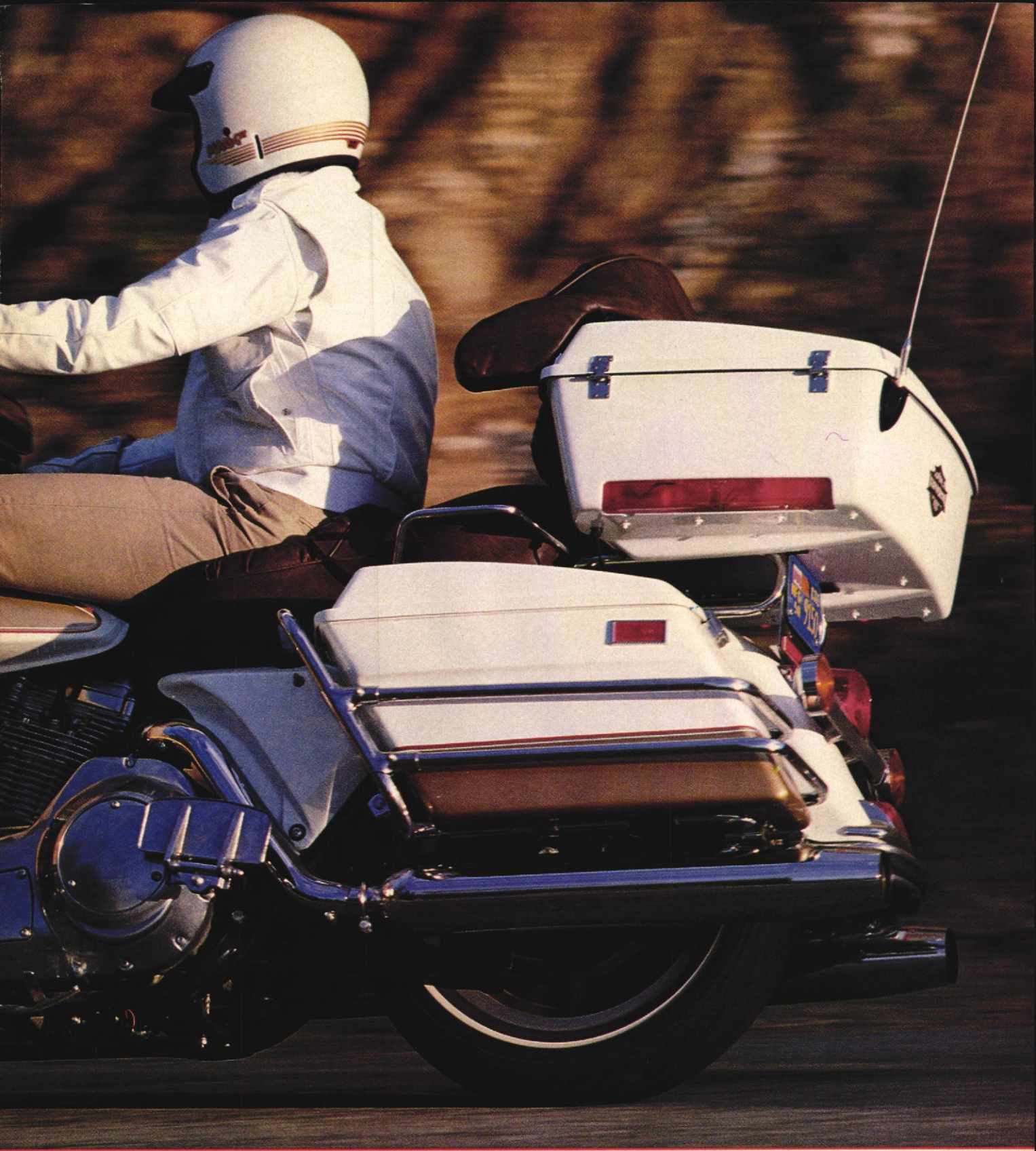


ROAD TEST:

Harley-Davidson FLTC Tour Glide Classic

Well, I guess there's no reason you can't do it that way.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 DAVID DEWHURST



BY JIM MILLER

If you subscribe to conventional wisdom, a successful heavyweight tourer has certain mechanical requirements: a liquid-cooled, multi-cylinder engine (four or six, take your pick) with at least one overhead camshaft, shaft drive, and a healthy dose of electronics in the form of cruise-control, fuel-injection, on-board computer or any combination thereof. Currently, every big-rig tourer from Japan conforms to that formula, and even BMW's full-dress K100RT fits that description.

Well, anyone steeped in conventional wisdom is liable to think he's been dragged through the looking glass into Wonderland after climbing aboard Harley-Davidson's FLTC. From the instant the starter clacks into engagement and the 1338cc vee-twin booms out its familiar song, it's obvious that convention be damned; the guys in Milwaukee couldn't care less about how the rest of the world does it. With its dual headlights, whitewall tires, heel-and-toe shifter and a brake pedal that looks like it belongs in a Dodge pickup, the FLTC guarantees *nobody* will mistake it for any other tourer.

That line of thinking continues with a

Continued

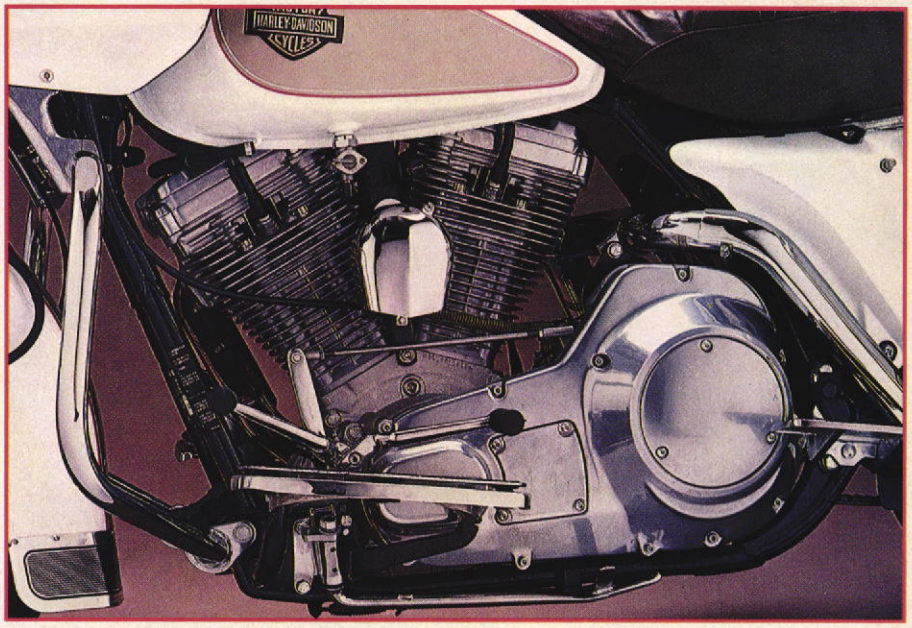
cursory inspection of the H-D's running gear, too. For example, although the rest of the world considers shaft drive to be *de rigeur* for a long-haul machine, Harley's top-of-the-line tourer transfers its power to the rear wheel via Gates Poly Chain. Since 1983, H-D has converted nearly all of its 80-cubic-inch fleet to belt drive, claiming the system is lighter, cleaner and easier to maintain than a chain, yet simpler and nearly as maintenance-free as a shaft. And in fact, the '86 Tour Glide weighs 26 pounds less than the chain-drive '84 model, and required no driveline maintenance even after more than 4000 miles.

Harley's belt drive also offers one unexpected benefit: reduced vibration. The FLTC is the third recent belt-drive Harley we've tested, and every one has had significantly less vibration than its chain-drive predecessor. Not all of the credit for that tranquility, of course, goes to the driveline; the combination of Heim-jointed stabilizers and automotive-style, soft-rubber engine mounts does a masterful job of controlling engine vibration. Though at idle the Harley shakes like a wet dog, as the engine nears 2000 rpm the vibration fades, returning only when the big vee-twin approaches its 5200-rpm redline.

Between those extremes, the motor provides power and instantaneous throttle response other touring riders will envy, even at engine speeds that would qualify as little more than fast-idle on other turn-key tourers. At 60 mph, the Tour Glide loafs along at a leisurely 2800 rpm, yet in a top-gear roll-on from that speed the H-D immediately pulls a two-bikelength lead over a Gold Wing Limited Edition, and keeps it until the Wing's higher top speed eventually drives the Honda ahead. More important, the Harley's idle-to-redline powerband puts the next break in traffic just a twist of the wrist away, regardless of the gear.

Just as the Tour Glide excels with an out-of-the-ordinary motor, the Harley's unconventional chassis holds a few pleasant surprises of its own. Foremost among those is the 'Glide's unique steering geometry, which is designed to provide sufficient front wheel trail for excellent stability, and at the same time minimize the steering head angle to eliminate the heavy steering often associated with touring bikes. To achieve those goals, the Tour Glide starts with a set of reversed triple clamps that position the fork tubes *behind* the steering head. Moreover, the triple clamps actually angle the fork tubes an additional 3 degrees (to 29) to increase front wheel trail and provide the steering with an additional measure of self-centering effect. The result is a sportbike-steep 26 degree steering head angle, and a whopping 6.16 inches of trail.

While you might not agree with Harley's method, you can't argue the results. At low speed, the Harley makes most other full-dress tourers seem twitchy by comparison, and it only feels better with speed. Even two-up the FLTC refuses to wander; the bike tracks with unwavering sureness, all the way to its 107-mph top speed. Though that stability might lead you to expect the 'Glide to be as unwieldy as a dump truck, in town the bike cuts through traffic with surprising ease. While some of that nimbleness is due to the Harley's steering magic, a large share of the credit goes to the Dunlop Touring Elites, which replace the square-edged K101 tires on the '84 FLT. Between those two, the '86 model changes direction much more easily, with almost no loss in straightline stability.



Rubber mounted footboards, heel-and-toe shifter and 80-cubic-inch vee-twin

Alternative approaches to traditional dilemmas.

FLTC's instruments consist of simple, black-on-white gauges

Avoiding the needle-less confusion of LCD digitalia.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

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That newfound agility really shows, too, should you decide to wick it up when the road starts to coil. While its backroad prowess can't match a Gold Wing's or Venture Royale's, the FLTC suffers in the comparison more from a shortage of cornering clearance more than it does from any gremlins in the chassis. For instance, the FLTC's steering is noticeably slower than that of the Honda or Yamaha, but the Harley's low center of gravity means it heels over more quickly and with far more ease than you'd expect from a 748-pound motorcycle. Once leaned into a corner, it locks on to an apex like a homing beacon, and changes its line only at the rider's request. Even if the brakes are applied, the H-D won't dart off-line in mid-turn.

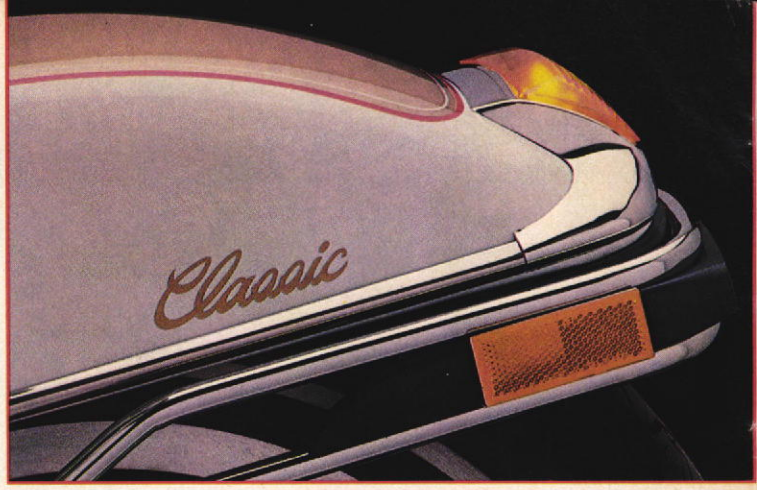
Those brakes also present a fine balance between good feel and low effort. The Kelsey-Hayes dual discs at the front are considerably improved over past H-D brakes, providing good feedback even during hard stops. Like much of the FLTC, the brakes have been continually updated over the past few years, this year getting a new rear-brake caliper that's claimed to be both lighter and quieter. What hasn't changed, though, is the oversize pedal that makes precise modulation difficult.

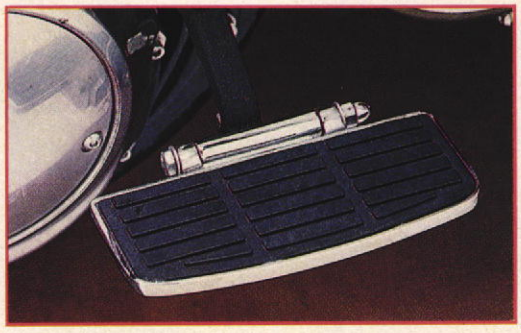
Another seemingly minor change for '86 is something near and dear, in a manner of speaking, to *any* touring rider's heart: the seat. Though at first it seems impossibly soft for long-distance comfort, an all-day stint will convince you otherwise. In fact, the Harley's seat offers the best thing this side of Holiday Inns for coast-to-coast comfort on the Interstates. And the rest of the FLTC's people-pleasing accommodations only add to that sense of comfort. The riding position is roomy, and—for a solo rider—there are *three* choices for footrests, with the footboards, front engine guard and passenger footrests. And despite the fairing's truncated dimensions (it lacks lowers), the

Continued

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Harley-Davidson FLTC-'86	14.378/90.00	107	748	141
Harley-Davidson FLTC-'84	14.603/88.75	107	774	152
Honda GL1200L Limited Edition-'85	13.346/98.36	113	810	134
Kawasaki Voyages-'84	13.346/97.61	116	882	142
Suzuki Cavalcade LX-'85	12.881/101.12	115	806	155
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	12.759/101.46	124	752	137





H-D FLTC *Continued*

Harley's frame-mount unit provides remarkably good wind protection for both rider and passenger. Although lower-body protection on the Classic is understandably in short supply, that's offset by a lack of buffeting, and the absence of the annoying "hand-in-the-back" draft common with other touring fairings.

What makes the Harley's long-term comfort even more surprising, though, is that it doesn't get much help from its suspension. The main problem at the rear is one common to most Harleys: With only 3.0 inches of travel, the FLTC simply lacks sufficient suspension travel to provide the Lincoln-class ride that's expected of most full-dress long-haulers. Nonetheless, at the lower end of their 0-10-psi range, the shocks offer a reasonably comfortable ride, though rough pavement quickly uses up their limited stroke. At the front, the fork responds to gentle, rolling undulations acceptably well, but sharp-edged bumps or concrete expansion joints are telegraphed straight to the rider, particularly with the fork set in the upper half of its 0-40-psi range. Below 20 psi, the fork's response is acceptably smooth, but not what you would call plush.

Moreover, the FLTC's front end also provides another illustration of Harley's decision to do things differently: The fork is equipped with an air-adjustable anti-dive system. Unlike other anti-dive setups, which increase compression damping to control nosedive during braking, Harley's system effectively increases the fork's spring rate by reducing the amount of air available to the fork. Under normal riding conditions, the Harley uses the air contained in both fork legs *and* the front engine guard as a spring medium. When the brakes are applied, a solenoid closes off the air line to the engine guard, and the decreased air volume effectively increases the spring rate. And while the H-D system is a complete departure from other anti-dive arrangements, it's similar in one respect: From a practical standpoint, it's not particularly effective, because the

Continued

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HI
Lights
LO
HORN
TURN-L
VOLUME
MOTOR
HARLEY-DAVIDSON
CYCLES
OFF
START
Engine
Stop
RUN
TURN-R
DN
UP
AM
FM
PG
TIME
TourGlide
Classic

high pressure required to reduce dive significantly also makes the fork pogo annoyingly over bumps.

The Tour Glide bristles with still other unconventional ideas, too, and some of them are more successful. For instance, Harley has replaced the crude Motorola sound system it offered as an option in the past with an ASI unit designed specifically for motorcycles, and it incorporates several unique, worthwhile features. Like some other touring rigs' stereos, the system is equipped with an automatic volume adjuster for ambient noise, but it also has a convenient, simple, sliding volume-control next to the left handgrip. And next to the right handgrip, a single switch controls station search, selection for AM/FM or CB-monitor for channel 19, as well as tape eject and direction, making it far easier to manipulate the system than with other touring bikes' stereos. Admittedly, the system itself doesn't surpass existing state-of-the-art units—the sound quality comes up short, and the auto volume adjustment is erratic—but it's in the ballpark, and absolutely *miles* ahead of the Motorola.

H-D has improved the FLTC's luggage, too, though the changes are relatively minor. The '86 model now uses separate latches and locks to secure the lids on the travel trunk and saddlebags, rather than the troublesome keylock pushbuttons found on the older models. In addition, the '86 Tour Glide no longer mounts the rear turnsignals on the saddlebags, which eliminates the wiring inside the bags and simplifies removing them to service the rear wheel. And while the added convenience is appreciated, greater capacity would be treasured even more, particularly since about one-third of the right bag's volume is taken up to make room for the battery. The Tour Glide can handle solo travel with no problem, but a week-long, two-up tour stresses the Harley's carrying capacity to its limits. You'll need to come up with some way to carry your gear, too, because soft liners are optional. And when you consider the Harley's near $10,000 price, that shortage seems ludricrous.

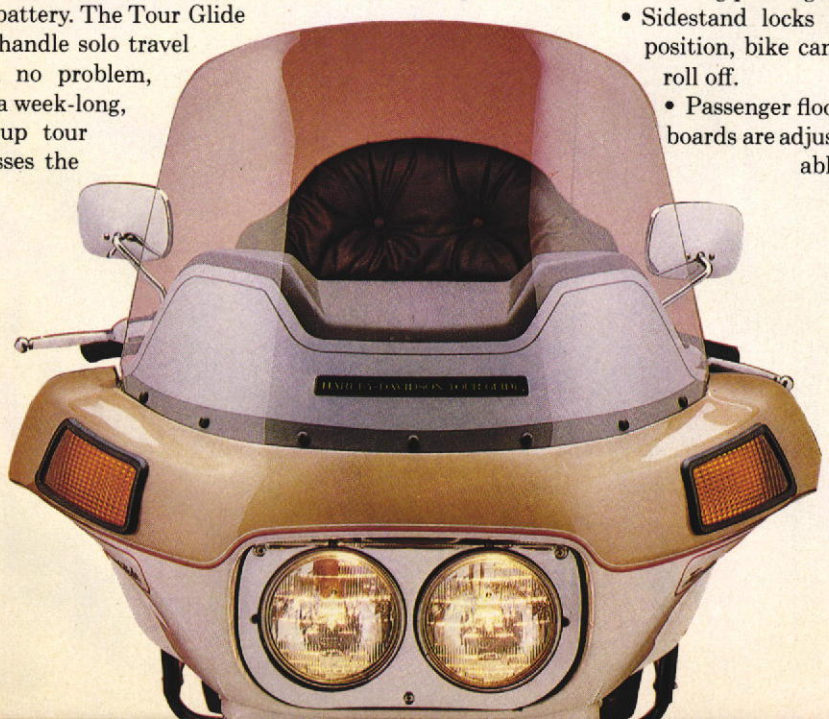
Still, over the past couple of years, Harley-Davidson has worked its distinctive form of magic on its top-of-the-line touring bike, and transformed the Tour Glide from a near-miss into a genuine contender for top honors in the Grand Touring Class. H-D's also managed to pull off this transformation with unconventional solutions that compromise neither the bike's look nor its character; the FLTC matches most of its contemporaries in sheer touring competence, and still does so without liquid-cooling, shaft drive or many of the accoutrements dictated by touring purists. So in a class in which the leading participants are difficult to separate without a micrometer, the FLTC offers touring riders a genuine alternative. And that unique quality is something none of the others can offer, at any price. •

NITS:

- Pop rivets on fairing pocket doors can pull loose.
- Toolkit is not up to class standards.
- Handlebar switches are awkwardly placed.

PICKS:

- Air adjustments are accessible.
- Oil level is easy to check.
- Throttle lock is convenient.
- Floorboards are three-position adjustable.
- Travel trunk opens to the side, and can be opened without disturbing passenger.
- Sidestand locks in position, bike can't roll off.
- Passenger floorboards are adjustable.



Ride Review

• I still hear the phrase "for a Harley" now and then, as in "it's pretty good, for a Harley." That qualification reflects the tired old stereotype of Harley-Davidsons being a breed apart, somehow undeserving of comparison to other brands of bikes. But lately the men from Milwaukee have been dismantling that image, by building motorcycles that can not only stand toe-to-toe with Japanese bikes, but spit in their eyes, as well.

The FLTC is one such motorcycle. In terms of comfort, capacity and convenience it represents a quantum leap over H-D touring bikes of as little as two years ago, and measures up to the finest contemporary touring machines from Japan. The Classic is not just pretty good "for a Harley," it's pretty good for a world-class touring bike—which is precisely what it is. *—Jerry Smith*

• See here, Harley, this can't happen. You don't piece together a tourer using parts that look like they were penned during Eisenhower's administration and come up with a bike this good. And you don't go around making God-knows-how-old concepts work as well as some high-tech designs. Finally, you simply *cannot* make the bike function so well with bodywork that looks as utterly traditional as the FLTC's.

Alas, Harley, you've proven me wrong, because the Classic is everything it can't possibly be. It's smooth, comfortable, as stable as a Republican's platform, and suprisingly modern. What's more, the '86 model is far and away a better bike than the '84—with little more than simple, effective updates. So, I don't care that you've made hash of my arguments, because when I'm riding the TC, nothing else seems to matter. *—Marc Cook*

• Miller, Cook and Smith have done admirable jobs describing the FLTC's long-haul capabilities. Yet all the well deserved praise they've heaped on it for its comfort and smoothness doesn't do justice to what impresses me most about this motorcycle. And at the risk of sounding trite, I'd sum the bike up in a single word: fun. Indeed, riding the FLTC is more fun than a bathtub full of otters. For me, this motorcycle makes every ride—no matter how far—an *event*, a happening on wheels that's akin to having your own parade.

In fact, I get a kick out of riding the FLTC, the likes of which I haven't experienced in a long time. It's like a hell-raising friend that sidles up to you with a conspiratorial wink and says, "Hey, dude, let's party!" That's an invitation few motorcycles can make, and one that I find impossible to refuse. *—Charles Everitt*

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Harley-Davidson FLTC Tour Glide Classic — street

IMPORTER: Harley-Davidson Motor Co. Inc., 3700 W. Juneau Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $9995 as tested

ENGINE

Type . . . . . four-stroke 45 degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement . . . . pushrod-operated overhead valves, two valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 88.8mm x 108.0mm
Displacement 1337.7cc
Compression ratio 8.5:1
Engine redline . . . . . 5200 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . one 34mm Keihin butterfly-type with accelerator pump
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . dry sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 310-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 19-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . double-row chain; 1.542:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . . toothed belt; 2.188:1 (70/32) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	3.241	10.935	6.67
II	2.210	7.456	9.78
III	1.603	5.408	13.48
IV	1.233	4.160	17.53
V	1.000	3.374	21.61

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa, 41mm stanchion tube diameter/ 5.0 in. (128mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Showa air-spring shocks/ 3.0 in. (75mm)

BRAKES

TIRES

Front . . . . . MT90S16 Dunlop K291T Touring Elite tubeless
Rear . . . . . MT90S16 Dunlop K291T Touring Elite tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight . . . . . 748 lbs. (339.3kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 44.6% front, 55.4% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . 1216 lbs. (551.6kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 435 lbs. (197.3kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 62.3 to 63.9 in. (1582 to 1622mm)
Seat height . . . . . 31.3 in. (796mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 31.4 in. (798mm)
Footboard height . . . . . 12.2 in. (310mm)
Ground clearance . . . 5.2 in. (133mm), frame crossmember
Steering head angle . . . . . 26.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 6.16 in. (157mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular, stamped and box-section mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 4.0 qt. (3.8/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.2 gal. (19.6/), including 0.7 gal. (2.6/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, oil temperature gauge, oil pressure gauge, voltmeter, clock

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 31 to 49 mpg (13 to 21 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 39 mpg (17 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 160 to 255 miles (257 to 410km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 22 to 34 miles (35 to 55km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 29 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 55 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 14.378 sec., 90.00 mph (145 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 107 mph (172 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 33 ft. (10.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 141 ft. (43.0m)

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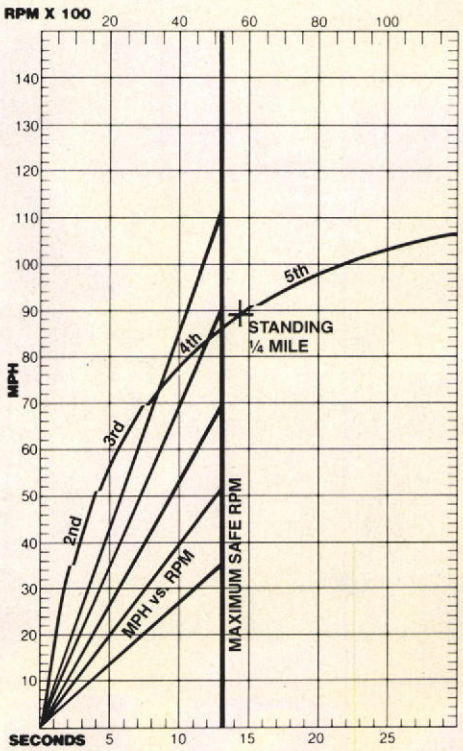

All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

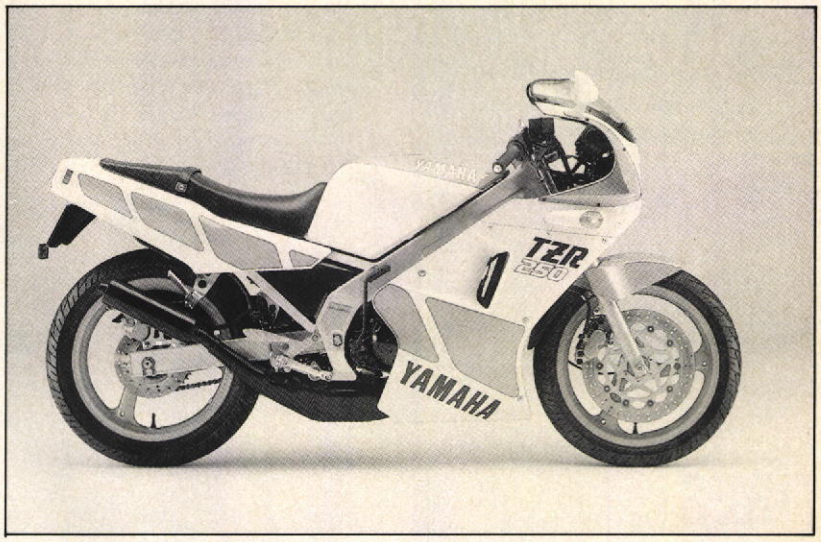
BY LARRY WORKS

COMING SOON

• These days, you can count on three things: death, taxes, and that a spanking-new 250 sportbike has just been released to the Japanese moto-market. New models keep cropping up, each more impressive than the last, with no sign of letup. The newest of the new is Yamaha's TZR250, which draws an even finer distinction between sportbike and racer than ever before. This pocket-rocket is powered by a racebike-inspired six-speed, 249cc liquid-cooled inline twin with crankcase reed-valve induction. And, like the RZV500R (see CYCLE GUIDE, October 1985), the TZR's oil-injection system is mechanically linked to the operation of its exhaust power valve. The claimed-278-pound TZR also features an aluminum "Delta Box" frame, with Yamaha's rising-rate Monocross rear suspension, 17-inch wheels and a four-pot-caliper floating disc brake in front. Moreover, the fairing is a nearly direct lift from Yamaha's TZ250, and is claimed to produce the lowest coefficient of drag of any quarter-liter streetbike. And that similarity to the TZ is no accident. One of the TZR's design goals was to be mechanically as close to the TZ250 as possible. Unquestionably, it is. Unfortunately, for the moment, anyway, the TZR will do all its streetfighting on Japanese pavement.

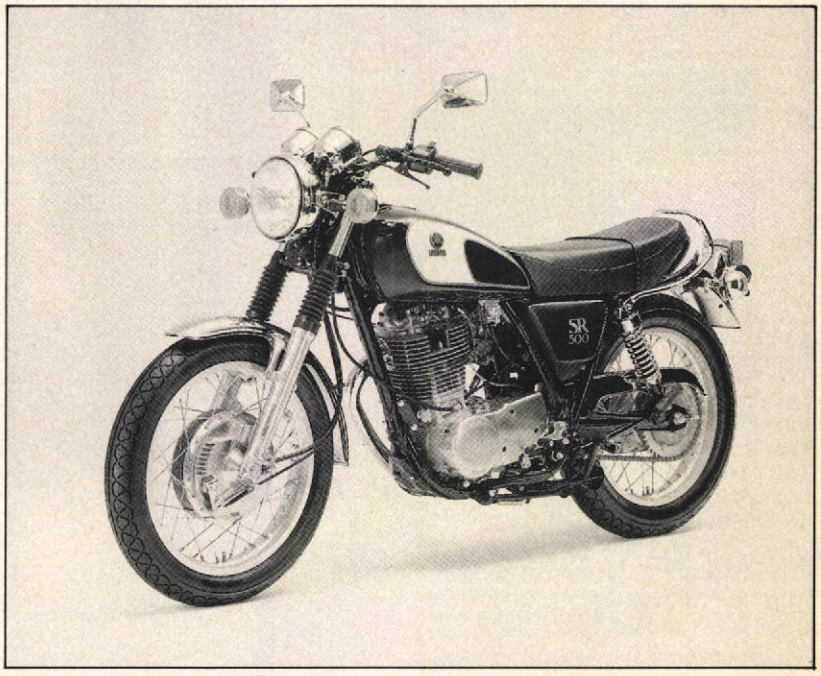
• While Yamaha's new TZR goes to the front of the streetfighting action in Japan, there's a rear guard action being waged, too. Yamaha's primary combatant in this battle is the SR500, which is still thumping away despite the introduction of the new SRX600. In fact, the SRX freed up the SR to go head-to-head with other crypto-traditional thumpers (see "Old Is New," page 24). And while the SR wasn't recast from the ground up for that confrontation, it's been changed significantly. An 18-inch front wheel replaces the previous 19-incher, and a front drum brake takes the place of the former single disc. In addition, fork boots have been added, and fuel tank capacity was bumped up two liters. And as proof that "traditional" doesn't necessarily mean clunky, the SR's handlebar was made lower and narrower, and the footpegs were moved back nearly 4 inches, necessitating a linkage-type gearshift.

• This last item falls neatly between Rumors and Coming Soon, but by the time you read this, it should be a *fait accompli*. The literbike GSX-R Suzuki we've rumored in the past is a rolling reality, and it's scheduled to be released to dealers in late December or early January. The most accurate reports are that it's powered by an air/oil-cooled motor that displaces 1054cc, and that the resemblance between the big-bore version and the three-quarter-literbike is anything but casual. You'll get the full scoop on the GSX-R as soon as it's available—right here, of course.



Yamaha's TZR250: latest red-hot spark from the quarter-liter bonfire

The dividing line between sportbike and racer has never been finer.



SRX600 introduction allowed SR500 to put on an old suit and go riding

Alive and well—and thriving in the Happy Days.

Continued

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COMING SOON:

Old Is New

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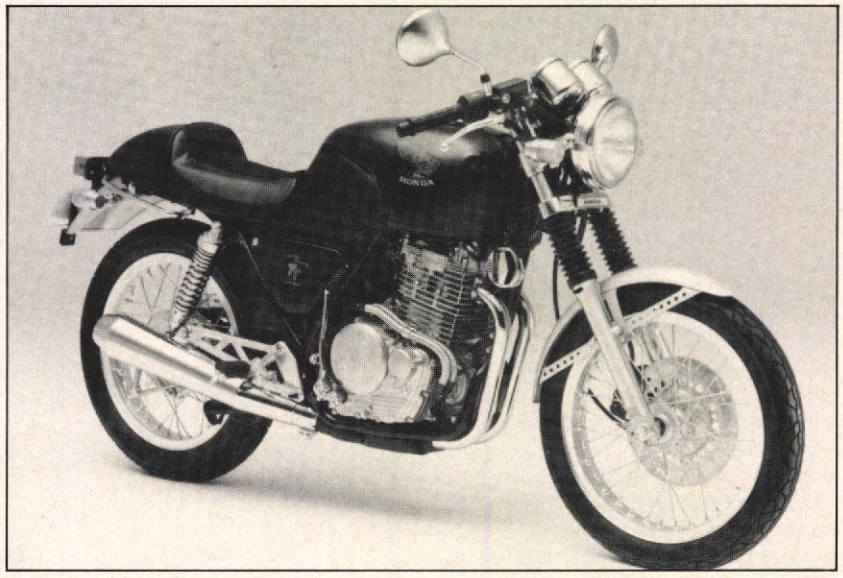
• True thumper fanatics are given to a single-minded obsession: What would one-cylinder streetbikes be like today if the British motorcycle industry hadn't fallen on hard times? The answer to that question has consumed countless laps on bench-racecourses worldwide, but the issue finally can be laid to rest. Those one-lungers might be quite a bit like *these*: Honda's GB500 and GB400 MkII.

To make this pair (and an unfaired GB400 as well), Honda applied a liberal coat of London Fog to its RFVC XBR500, in the form of 4.5-gallon aluminum fuel tanks, fork boots, hump-backed seats, steel fenders and the name "Tourist Trophy" on the sidecovers. The result addresses that thumper obsession head-on—and with a stiff upper lip, as it were.

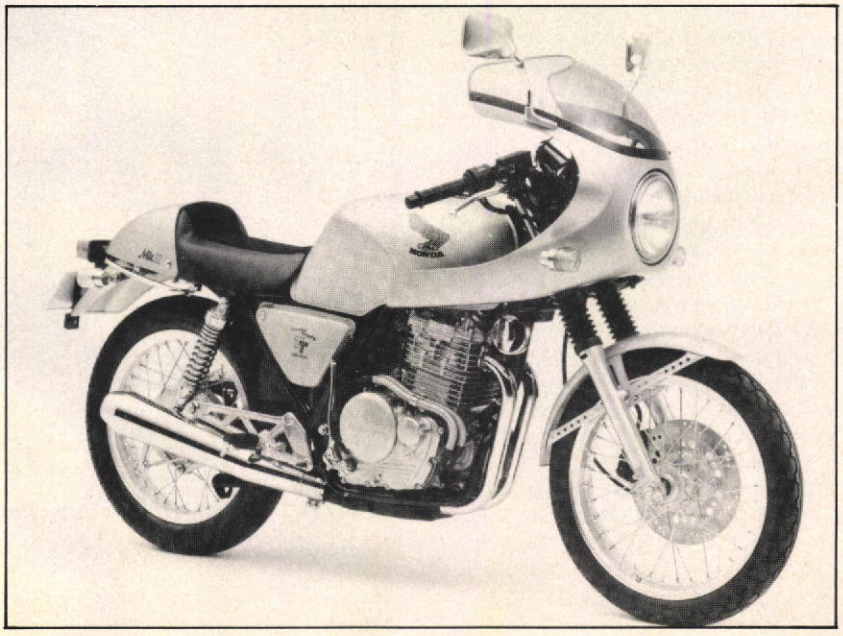
One-lung fanciers still thrive in Japan, and even support such aftermarket items as mock girder forks for riders of '50s-look café bikes. And, Honda hopes, they'll support the Tourist Trophy singles; initially, the GB (Great Britain?) series is limited to domestic sale. Later, when the demand of the Japanese market is satisfied, perhaps these expatriate British singles will return to the place of their conceptual origin.

—Larry Works



Honda's GB thumper series neatly links '50s and '80s

Japanese high-tech spray-painted with British Racing Green.



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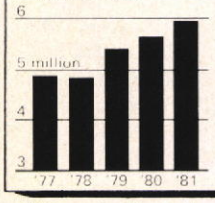
Cycles are big business

Registered motorcycles in the U.S.A. Source: Stat. Abs. of U.S.A. prepared by Bur. of Census.



Motorcycle registrations increased by more than one million in the five years from 1977 to 1981. There were nearly 6 million registered motorcycles in 1981—the latest year for which figures are available—and they all require maintenance.

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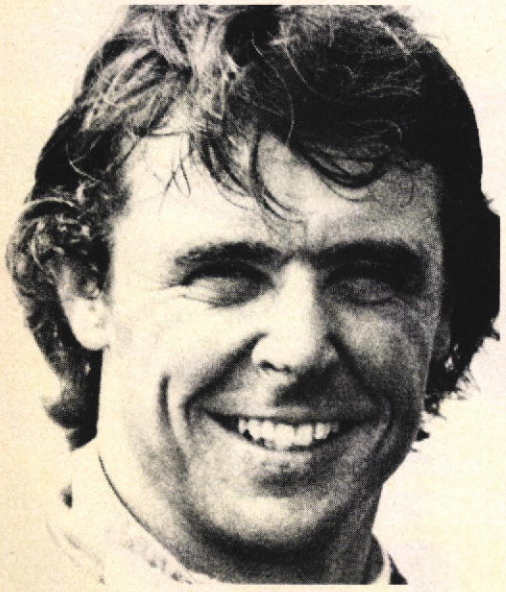

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FEDERAL CASES

• The biggest news in worldwide motorcycle legislation these days concerns Great Britain's anti-noise campaign. The British Motor Cycle Association (MCA) wants existing legislation amended to allow officials other than police to enforce noise standards on aftermarket exhausts. MCA is emphasizing a program of voluntary noise control on the part of motorcyclists in an effort to stave off anticipated noise-control legislation that would be even more severe.

• That government-enforced noise control might come in the form of proposed annual noise tests, which would have to be passed before motorcycle licensing could be completed in Great Britian. In addition, any bike pulled over for suspected noise violations would be packed off to one of the noise-test facilities, and given a hearing on the spot.

• Britain is not alone in concern over motorcycle exhaust noise, however. The Australian EPA has asked for advice from the motorcycle industry there to help devise new noise-level controls for non-standard bikes. Current proposed legislation in Australia would set noise limits not only for streetbikes, but for off-road bikes, roadracers and dragbikes, as well. The upshot, if current proposals there are adopted, is that anyone with a modified motorcycle could be subject to legal sanctions imposed by the EPA.

• Exhaust noise isn't the only aspect of motorcycling that's come under legislative scrutiny, either. British measures due to go into effect in October 1986 would set a minimum standard for wet-brake stopping performance of at least 60 percent of dry braking performance. The standard also will include a test for dry-brake fade. Insiders there have criticized the legislation as unnecessary, and claim that typical wet-brake performance for a modern motorcycle is 80 percent or greater of dry brake performance.

• If you're planning a two-up ride through Ireland, it could be that time is running out. The Irish government reportedly is considering a proposal to ban passengers on bikes. The proposal is said to stem from the fact that basic motorycle insurance in the Emerald Isle doesn't extend to passengers, and most riders don't buy the extra coverage required. Another proposal under consideration would change the insurance laws there to require passenger coverage.

• An Ontario, Canada, "lemon law" financed by auto companies will use independent arbiters to settle claims of defects in light trucks and autos there. Motorcycles were excluded in the initial program, but Canadian sources indicate that situation could change in the near future. Reportedly, the rising cost of motorcycles has triggered a desire to see two-wheeled lemons come in for the squeeze also.

• Florida lawmakers recently revised that state's laws so that insurance companies can no longer raise a customer's rates as the result of certain speeding tickets. The change won't

help serious scofflaws in the Sunshine State, though, because the legislation still allows increased rates if you're cited for traveling 15 mph or more above the posted speed limit, or if you receive two or more tickets in 18 months.

• Finally, California AB412 was recently signed into law. The controversial rider-education bill, which seemed slated for a gubernatorial veto prior to an active letter-writing campaign urged by the AMA, will be funded by a $2 increase in the annual cost of registering a streetbike in that state. The increased fees will be used to fund projects with the overall objective of reducing motorcycle accidents in that state.

• And winning this month's award for bureaucratic roadblocks of dubious merit is Maryland, a state which seems determined to acquire a reputation for rigid adherence to the national speed limit. The latest method of enforcement there reportedly involves "rolling roadblocks," in which multiple police vehicles run side-by-side at exactly 55 mph on selected highways, neatly ensuring that the Double Nickel won't be devalued.

RUMORS

• The rumor mill's first item this month just might bring things to a screeching halt—though probably without a skid. First, there are substantiated reports that BMW will have its own anti-lock braking device ready in time for 1987 models. The talk is that the unit is similar to the Lucas-Girling device (Guide Lines, October 1985), except that it uses electronic sensors to monitor brake lockup. The current conversation is that the unit will be displayed at the Cologne Show in 1986, and will be offered as an option on '87 K100 and K75 streetbikes. The second half of this little bit of whimsy is that BMW will be the *second* major bikebuilder to offer production anti-lock brakes. Sources overseas have linked Kawasaki with Lucas-Girling, and further reports indicate Kawasaki Heavy Industries might try to outbrake Bayerische Motoren Werke, by offering anti-lock brakes *before* the next model year.

• Talk of BMW anti-lock braking systems is pretty spectacular, but it's certainly no more flamboyant than another bit of Beemer gossip. Despite a considerable body of evidence to the contrary, reports of a BMW R80RT with an automatic transmission refuse to die out. This item's persistence notwithstanding, an AutoBeemer seems like nothing more than wishful thinking by the lazy-feet fraternity.

• Insiders at Honda have leaked that the bike Honda campaigned at the Bol d'Or will prove that racing improves the breed—by leading to a red-hot sportbike with both a single-sided swingarm and rising-rate suspension. We've even heard that the project has been assigned its own code name: One-Arm Bandit.

• And it's just possible that if that new-generation Honda transfers from R&D over to the assembly lines, it will be going head-to-head with a new Kawasaki 750 that's the object of

Continued

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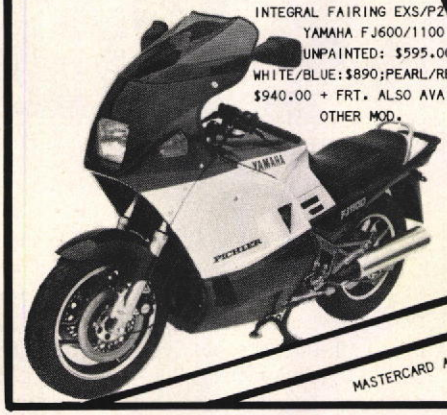
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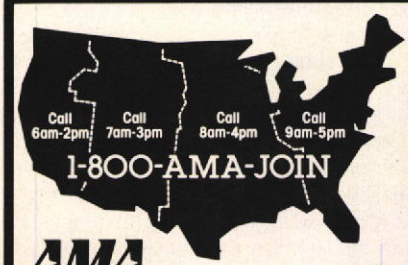

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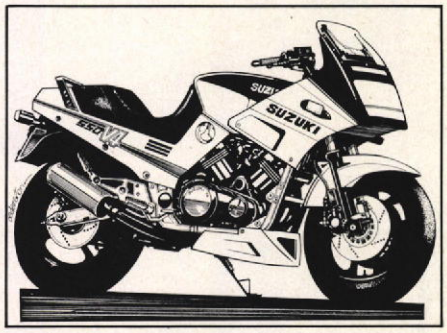
heated gossip. The talk inside Kawasaki concerns an '87-model four-cylinder machine with a supercompact engine. The tail end of this tale is that both racing *and* street versions will be offered.

• With much of Suzuki's lineup still under wraps, anything with a Suzuki logo on it is still fair game for speculation. You've read in this column of a rebirth of single-cylinder streetbikes, and of the part Suzuki is said to be playing in that resurrection of the thumper. The latest tidbit is that there will be several Suzuki four-stroke singles over the next few years, and that one of them will be powered by what's essentially one cylinder lopped off the air/oil-cooled GSX-R1100.

• Other Suzuki gossip centers on the Katana-look half-liter vee-four that was rumored in the September edition of this column. Sources inside say the leaked information created a mini-maelstrom at Suzuki. That's to be expected, but so far no one's *denied* the rumor. What we have heard, however, is that concern over going head-to-head with the new generation of midsize two-stroke streetbikes might delay the introduction of the Suzuki—if there is such a vee-four in fact. But with Suzuki still holding back the news of its '86 models, anything's fair game for speculation.



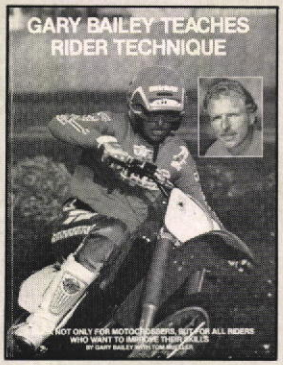
Katana vee-four is fair game for rumors

Maybe for new two-stroke 500s, too.

• In another update of a continuing rumor, that overseas report of a production Norton Rotary continues to develop new facets. Our boys in the trenchcoats Over There have reported that the factory, which has produced only police specials of the Rotary for the past few years, has accepted new orders, and production is due to be increased. Whether this new activity means that the Rotary will finally step out of uniform and into civilian duds, only time—and the strength of the British motorcycle cottage industry—will tell.

• In a final item this month, reports from several inside sources indicate the ATV market is in for a new infusion of technology. From what's being said, recent competition from snowmobile manufacturers—as well as aftermarket ski/tread kits that leave a four-wheeler looking like an armored personnel carrier—have given rise to notions that the majors will attack the lucrative snowmobile market from a different angle. Don't be surprised to see new Japanese ATVs that seem built just as much for the ski slopes as for the dirt.

Book Review



Gary Bailey Teaches Rider Technique
by Gary Bailey with Tom Mueller
87 pages, $16.95
Gary Bailey
P.O. Box 130
Axton, Virginia 24054

• Any motocross racer—from aspiring amateur to polished pro—should find "Rider Technique" an invaluable tool to help hone his skills. But this book is more than just a motocross primer. It includes basic and advanced lessons applicable to dirtbike riding *off* closed circuits, too. And therein lies the value of "Technique." Even casual riders can learn from Bailey, to develop methods of handling tricky off-road situations.

As with most how-to race books, "Technique" includes chapters that deal with the basics of competition, ho-hum reading no matter who writes it. But Bailey, in collaboration with Mueller, addresses a subject often overlooked by race authors: having fun. Right from the start, Bailey emphasizes that you ride motocross for fun—even if you're a pro. To drive home that message, he weaves the fun factor into each lesson, pointing out that all the skills in this book are designed to improve your motocross riding *and* to raise your level of fun.

Bailey's message is accessible, too, because most of the material is straightforward and easy to read, with sharp, large B/W photographs accompanying each chapter. The book's primary action-photo model is none other than David Bailey, "The Professor's" son and star pupil, and he helps illustrate Papa Bailey's words, inspiring the reader to emulate the prescribed antics.

The $16.95 price tag might seem high for a magazine-format book of this sort, but to a racer looking for more speed, cost is rarely a factor. And for inexperienced off-road riders looking to reduce the number of Flying Ws they perform on a trailride, the cost is, indeed, a small price to pay. After all, what's more fun than showing your know-it-all riding buddies how to *really* ride off-road?

—Dain Gingerelli

HARD CASH

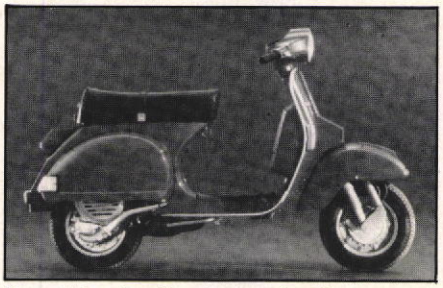
• As Federal Cases this month will tell you, Britain is in the grip of concern that loud exhaust systems will bring about prohibitive anti-noise legislation. The problem is of such proportions that British motorcycle industry officials have requested Japanese motomanufacturers to slice the price of OE exhaust systems, in order to halt or slow the sale of less-expensive aftermarket systems—which are more likely to be illegally loud. Reportedly, the same plea went out several years ago, with Honda the only firm to comply. The line of argument is that the failure of the manufacturers to act this time could well cost them more than they bargained for: the British motorcycle market.

• So much for the economics of sound. As for the economics of sight, things are on the upswing. Ride For Sight, a Canadian motorcycle fund-raising event, collected more than $250,000 for the National Retinitis Pigmentosa Foundation of Canada. It was the third year for the fund-raiser, with total amounts increasing each year.

• In another Canadian charity ride, 58 riders completed 90 laps of a 150km circuit around Montreal on a K100RS to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. Three oil changes, one tire change and 15 days later, the group donated more than $8000 to the organization.

• And as long as you've got your calculator warmed up, here's another figure you can enter: $155,000. That figure is the record purse for the 1986 Daytona 200 Motorcycle Classic for Superbikes.

• In October, we reported that if the right distributor can be found, Lambretta scooters will be available for U.S. sale. But should a U.S. sales deal come to pass, Lambretta will be facing its traditional competitor: Vespa. Piaggio, the Italian manufacturer of the Vespa scooter, has named General Bicycle and Moped Co. Inc., of Rye Brook, New York, as the new distributor for the scooter.

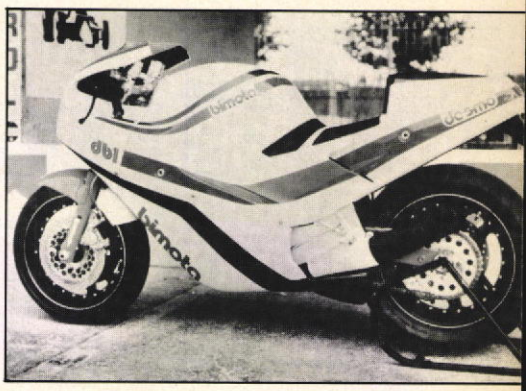


Vespa (above) and Lambretta poised for combat

Italy vs. Spain in a duel on tiny wheels.

AFTER THE FACT

• Sometimes it's hard to tell the players without a scorecard. For instance, the Bimota DB1 featured in the October-issue Coming Soon is a 100-horsepower racebike. The Bimota DB1 you see here is a 70-horsepower streetbike. How you get from the first to the second is to detune the engine, add lights and a chainguard enclosure, then change the exhaust system, fork and brake calipers. As a final touch, you repaint the integral numberplate on the tailpiece to read "desmo." *Voila,* from ultra-exclusive racebike to equally exclusive street, in one easy paragraph.



Bimota's DB1, the streetbike

To all but a few, a fine distinction.

• In the "Blue Chip Wish List," on page 59 of the December issue, the suggested retail prices for the Segura Spencer jacket and leather overalls are incorrect. The correct price for either the jacket or the overalls is $209.

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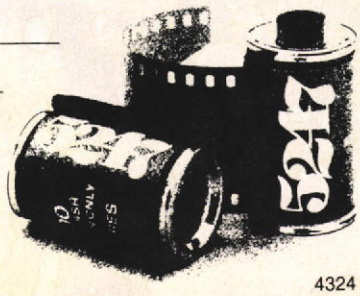

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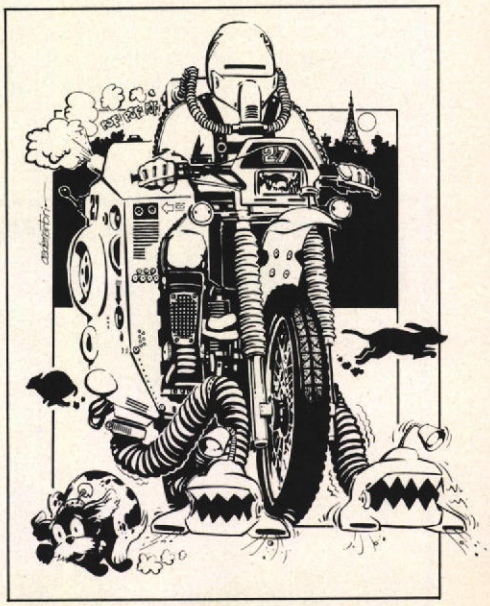
APART FROM THE CROWD

• America's sole surviving motorcycle company has put its name on some fascinating products in the past. Everything from beer to rub-on tattoos has been emblazoned with the Harley-Davidson eagle.

Those products, produced under license from Harley-D, have netted a considerable sum for the Milwaukee moto-manufacturer. In fact, according to some reports, Harley-Davidson will receive $1.35 million for the use of its name and logo in 1985. And part of that sum reportedly will be derived from a new product, one which die-hard Harley fans might feel lacks the brawny image of tats and brew: Harley-Davidson wine cooler. The concoction reportedly will be made under license by a California juice manufacturer. Welcome to the era of the fern bar, Harley . . . for sure.

• Through the years, people have done some strange things with motorcycles, everything from powering them with jet engines to making them pull train cars. But nothing tops what's going on in Paris. The city government there recently bought a fleet of XT350



Everyone loves Paris when it sizzles . . .

But not, apparently, when it squishes.

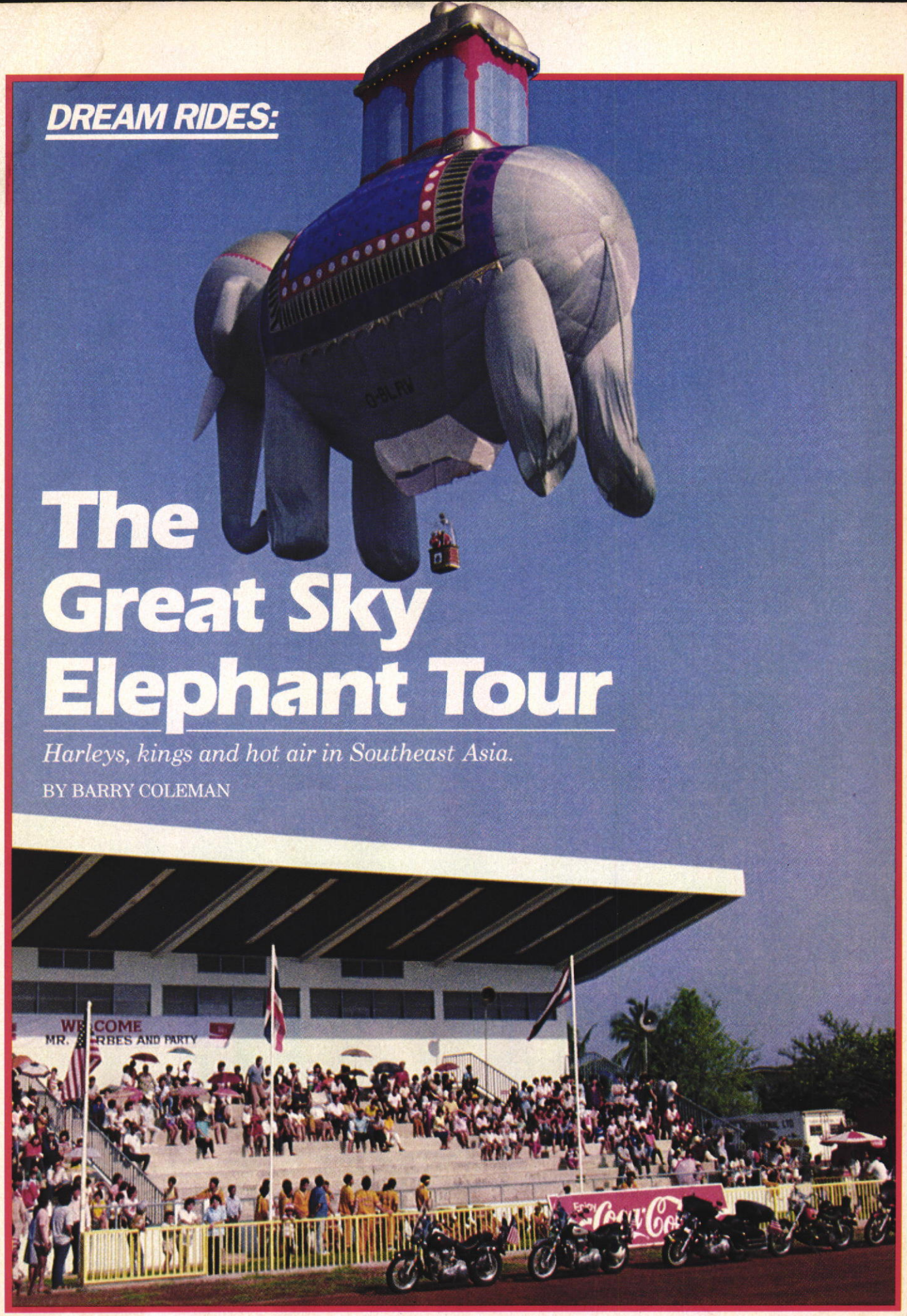
Yamahas for its sanitation department. These bikes give new meaning to the term dual-purpose: They've been specially equipped to clean up after the city's dogs. The, uh, vehicle's design includes a huge vacuum cleaner mounted on and around the rear of the bike, with lever-operated, flexible suction nozzles mounted at each side of the front wheel. The pooper-scooper XTs are reportedly so successful, they'll soon make their appearance in other major French cities. Their use is admittedly unusual, but it's comforting to know that motorcycles have contributed to making Paris in the springtime an enduring institution. ●

DREAM RIDES:

The Great Sky Elephant Tour

Harleys, kings and hot air in Southeast Asia.

BY BARRY COLEMAN



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DREAM RIDES

If you wanted to dream up something extraordinary, something on the fringes of motorcycle fiction, you might be capable of something like this:

A businessman—a magazine publisher, let's say—and his son set out one morning in the businessman's own plane, a Boeing 727. In the back of the plane is a Harley-Davidson, along with what looks like a large laundry basket. The plane stops overnight in Tangier, where it turns out the businessman has a palace, and a German, a Frenchman and an Englishman join the party. They proceed to Bangkok, Thailand, where they meet up with more people and their motorcycles—all Harley-Davidsons.

A day or two later the whole party—all of whom are dressed in red shirts emblazoned with some sort of symbol—rides out to a park next to a Buddhist temple. The king and queen of Thailand are there, with dancing girls, sword dancers, musicians, all kinds of things. Some of the party take what looks like a large multicolored nylon sheet and spread it out on the ground near the laundry basket that came in the plane. The sheet turns out to be some sort of bag, and they light a ferocious gas heater to blow hot air into the bag. The bag turns out not to be a bag, but an elephant, an elephant of gigantic proportions—an elephant balloon, complete with howdah, six stories high. The crown princess of Thailand gets in the basket under the elephant's belly and goes for a ride.

Next, the party leaves Bangkok in a long, hairy convoy with police sirens wailing. For eight days they hurtle around Thailand, stopping only to fly the elephant and socialize; one night they have dinner with the king and queen at their summer palace by the sea. Then they ride into Malaysia, where they visit that country's king on a golf course. Then they ride into Singapore for a huge banquet, fly the elephant one last time, and then jump into the 727 and fly away.

Nobody could dream up a motorcycle trip like that. It's so unlikely it could only be a true story. In fact it could only be a Malcolm Forbes story.

This was the trip (and in this hallucenogenic context, trip could hardly be a better word) of the Great Sky Elephant. There have been others, as Forbes-watchers will be aware, such as the march on Moscow, the China tour, and the Pakistan ride, where the Pakistanis were treated to the spectacle of a 240-foot-tall ballon-replica of their national monument, the Minar-e-Pakistan. It was the first of a series of never-to-be-forgotten visions. Next came the Sphinx that flew over Cairo, and then the elephant that hovered over the jungles of Southeast Asia.

As with most of Malcolm's two-wheel adventures, this one employed Harley-Davidsons, including an FXRDG Disc Glide and an Electra Glide. The Electra Glide, ridden mostly by Denny Fleck, Forbes' head of ballooning, came equipped with a horn capable of playing 50 tunes, some at considerable length, in rich harmony and delicate counterpoint. Apart from the fact that Denny's disco helped to keep us awake at critical times on the tour, it also gave us the chance to salute passers-by with numbers ranging from "Yankee Doodle" to "Eternal Father Strong to Save," an eccentric but good-natured gesture of bonhomie.

There's always something new about these journeys, some advance on the madness of previous ones, and aside from the Electra Glide's Wurlitzer imitation, this time it was the fact that we crossed national boundaries. Doing so provides the opportunity to see how people with different cultural backgrounds react to flying elephants and motorcycles that play "Dixie," and it also gives the rider a chance to think about the relative characteristics of the motorcyclists in different nations.

For instance, there is an enormous number of small motorcycles in Bangkok, all of them in full-time employment and usu-

The Great Sky Elephant Tour

The king and queen of Thailand were there, with dancing girls, sword dancers, all kinds of things. This was the trip of the Great Sky Elephant.

ally carrying three or four people. The Japanese, of course, have noticed the trend. Suzuki, for example, has an 80cc model with a very long seat called the Family. And sure enough, it's common to see mom and pop go flying by with two or three children stacked between them. Yamaha, on the other hand, has a rakish little number called the Fighter. Those who have seen Thai boxing, or who have followed the Thai approach to the Vietnamese incursions on their border with Kampuchea, will have some idea of what such a name might mean in terms of traffic flow. When it comes to motorcycles, the traffic flow is brisk.

At first the traffic seems anarchic, and yet there is a sort of order to it. If you observe long enough, you see it is all governed by a simple, effective rule: Never look back. The motorcyclists of Bangkok are incredible; I've never seen any like them. Their reactions are positively electronic in their swiftness, and all because of the rule. Your responsibility is what you can see in front of you. It's up to you to anticipate and understand whatever is taking place ahead and none of your business what's going on behind. You can move wherever you like with absolutely no notice to those in back. That's their concern; you are part of what they have to anticipate.

Running the Thai traffic gauntlet, then, was one one of our first lessons on the tour. And in the process, we discovered another reality: It was *hot* and very humid, maybe 85 percent. We were in Bangkok at the hottest time of the year, with the sun directly overhead at noon. Consequently, on Day One we all found out even more new things about motorcycling, such as how hot you can get. After a couple of hours slow broiling, in which any moving air served only to add an appetizing crispness to the almost-finished product, I was beginning to fantasize about those wonderful frozen evenings when going anywhere on a motorcycle was out of the question.

We stopped at Ayutthaya, the ancient capital of Thailand. We rolled to a halt between the crumbling spires of the shrines of antiquity and parked beneath the scarlet and gilt splendor of a great wat—a Buddhist temple. There's where we found out something else about motorcycling, namely how much liquid of varying temperatures and consistencies a motorcyclist on the brink of dehydration will drink before he takes the slightest notice of a scarlet and gilt temple—or anything else. The remainder of the day's ride, to Khorat, was something less than a breeze, but we were saved by a wonderful cloudburst. Mercifully, we were drenched from head to foot. Another lesson: how much, under certain circumstances, motorcyclists will welcome rain.

We flew the elephant in Khorat, and on the next day headed back south to Pattaya. On leaving Pattaya the following day, a couple of the boys, Malcolm and his son, Bob Forbes, made a big mistake. It looked like it was going to rain, and indeed it did, but then it cleared up and we were back to full-blast Thai/fry conditions. The heat was bad enough for those of us who were prepared simply to get wet. Imagine what it was like for Malcolm and Bob, who had chosen to put on their rainsuits. Even then, it might not have been quite so grim had we not been passing, once again, through Bangkok. But we didn't pass. We got stuck. We got snarled up. Right in the middle of the traveling road show of Bangkok traffic.

There once was an Italian, name of Dante, who wrote a well-known book about hell. It was the towering "Inferno." Had Dante been in that snarl-up in a rainsuit, his great opus would have had another title: "Impervious Nylon." Somehow or other, Malcolm and Bob staggered out the other side, and if red cheeks are a sign of health, they looked terrific. The suits came off at the next gas stop, and Malcolm and Bob were wringing wet. That was the end of rainsuits in Southeast Asia for the Forbes team.

Continued

Beneath the scarlet and gilt splendor of a great wat, we found out how much liquid a motorcyclist on the brink of dehydration will drink.

You might wonder why they didn't just stop and take them off. Good question. It's just that there is a schedule to these great tours of Malcolm's, a dynamic that somehow cannot be denied full rein. You can stop, but it's like pulling the emergency cord on the Orient Express; you have to have a pretty good reason for doing so. Strangely enough, though, the constraints of the tour didn't deter us. Even terminal thirst wasn't a problem after the first couple of days. We adjusted to the heat and humidity, and after a while it felt quite pleasant, with much of the soothing warmth of a pizza oven.

On the night of the Big Fry, we stopped at Hua Hin, where the king and queen invited us to dinner. This, by the way, is the same royal family, a couple of generations later, featured in "The King and I," but don't mention that in Thailand because the royal family is not amused. The next morning, we set off on a long haul, the longest of the trip, to Phuket, an island in the Andaman Sea. The journey took almost 10 hours, but we could hardly complain, because Phuket is, no doubt about it, a magical area. Indeed, the best riding of the whole trip was when we rode to Phuket and then to Hat Yai. One day we wound through luxuriant mountains, the next between massive pillars of volcanic rock, like gigantic beehives plunging up out of the greenery.

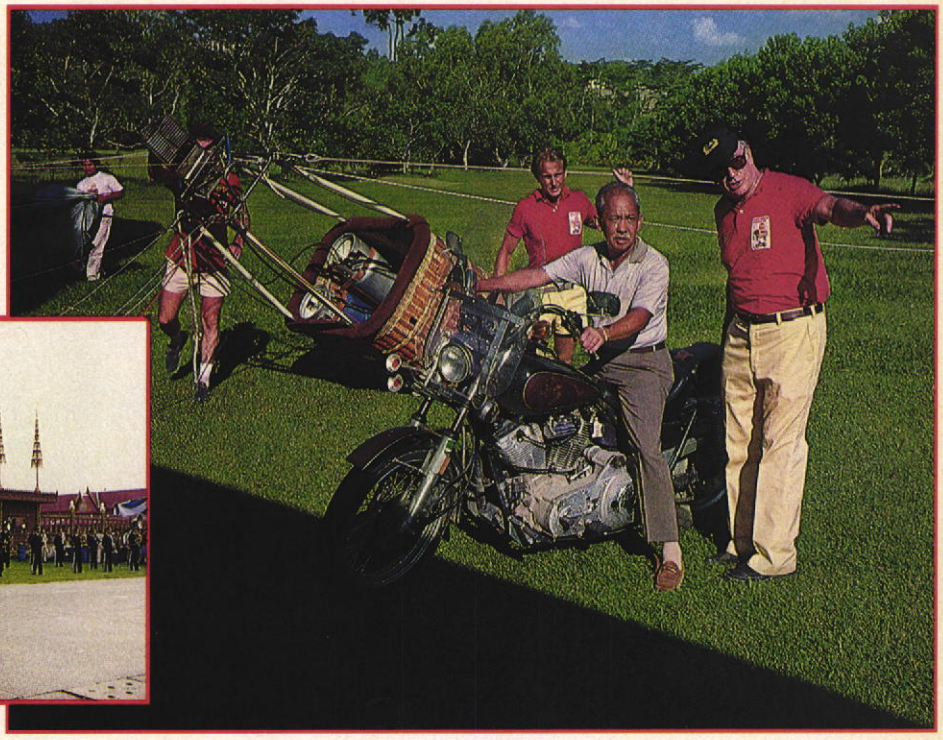
As we left Thailand and rode into Malaysia, we couldn't help but notice, for example, that Malaysia has a helmet law. It took us a few miles of the neat and well-tended highways to realize that there is, in fact, a supplementary helmet law: no full-face helmets. This at first seems to be a bad law based on poor information. On closer examination, it turns out to be a bad law based on the predominance of the rule of the road we observed in Bangkok: Never look back. The theory is that full-face helmets obscure peripheral vision. Now this might be true, but only if you never move your head to look around. Given the forward-only rule, peripheral vision is something that rarely—if ever—comes into play.

We also noticed that there are far fewer motorcyclists in Malaysia than in Thailand, but still the pace in a town like Kuala Lumpur is lively. Mind you, everything in Kuala Lumpur is lively. One of the main spectator sports in town is watching the city grow. Five years ago, it was a post-colonial capital whose eye-level buildings were perfectly adequate for all its known purposes, but that was before one of Asia's great economic miracles hit town. Now it's so high you have trouble flying an elephant over it.

The leg from Penang to Ipoh (a wonderful town later described to me by a somewhat awed non-resident as "the Las Vegas of Malaysia") was the most vivid lesson in Malaysian motorcycling we were to have. Normally, the long and awkward convoy was preceded by a police escort, which enabled the riders at the front and back to arrive in the same city on the same day. But coming out of Penang something went awry; in a nutshell, there was no escort. That didn't matter much to us as individuals, but it had certain consequences for the caravan. All of a sudden, that's what we were: individuals. What made it

The Great Sky Elephant Tour

"I have wanted a Harley for such a long time. And now God has sent me one," said the king. "Small 'g,' your majesty," said Malcolm.



memorable was that we had picked the single busiest stretch of road in Malaysia. It's difficult to know quite how to put this. A busy stretch of road in Malaysia is not like a busy stretch of road anywhere else. There are at least twice the number of cars per mile because the natives drive so close together. But does their proximity and the fact that they are hurtling equally tight and fast in either direction deter the locals from passing? No, sir, it does not; far from it. It seems to encourage it, out of some sense of urgency. Like I said, quite a ride.

The final stage of our journey was marked by another striking incident, of the kind which undoubtedly is unique to the Forbes phenomenon. At the end of our ride from Kuala Lumpur to Johore Bahru, which is at the southernmost tip of Malaysia, we dropped in to see the king of Malaysia, at his request. He was at the golf course, so we Harleyed over and waited politely for his game to end.

We weren't there long before the king showed up. We had come to fly the elephant, but the king seemed to indicate that the elephant could wait. He had other ideas, namely Harley-Davidsons. Truth to tell, he couldn't keep his eyes off them. He walked around them, he touched and he poked, and he leapt deftly from saddle to saddle. Naturally, Malcolm invited the king to take a ride. He was sitting on the Disc Glide, and no sooner said than done, he fires her up and swoops away to goodness knows where. A minute or two later, he's back.

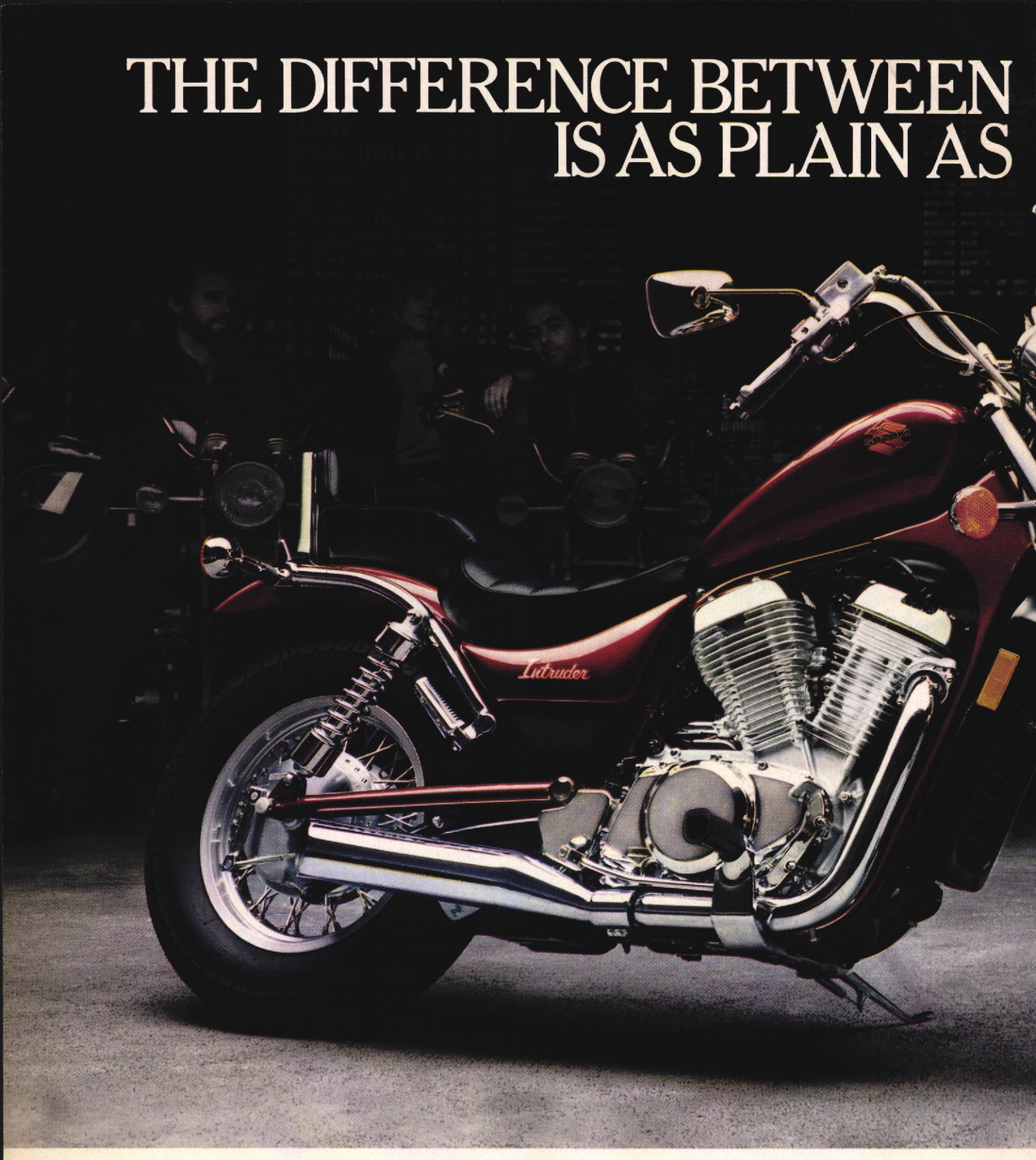
Wonderful, says the king, wonderful. There's nothing like a Harley, right? Well, your majesty, says Malcolm, it's yours, if you'd like it. The king was ecstatic. "Only last week," he said, "I wrote to our consul general in New York asking for brochures of the whole Harley range. I have wanted a Harley for such a long time. And now, God has sent me one." I thought for a moment Malcolm was lost for words. "Well, er, small 'g,' your majesty," he said. And off the king rides again on his new FXRDG.

A moment or two later, he's back. He feels it's a trifle lumpy-sounding, running a bit rich, and do we have a shop manual? Yes, sir, we do. Wonderful, says the king, and he rides off toward the golf course. Later we fly the balloon on a golf course full of high-school students and livid golfers, and the king is hurtling up and down the fairway, flicking the Harley in between them. So now the king of Malaysia rides a Harley. I bet he doesn't get thrown out of too many places.

All good trips should have their abiding image, and a Forbes trip can provide any number of contenders, such as making a gift of a Harley to a king. But the Great Sky Elephant Tour provided an outright champion for any motorcyclist. See, among the tunes that the horn on Denny's Electra Glide played were the national anthems of the countries we visited. One morning in Pattaya, we were greeted at the balloon-launching site by a military band. They played "The Stars and Stripes Forever," and naturally we wanted to play something in their honor, too. Denny punched in the numbers and hit the button. Now, the Thais are particularly patriotic, and they were on their feet practically before they heard the opening notes. But they were puzzled for a moment, because they couldn't see where it was coming from; it *couldn't* be from that big red Harley. . . .

The military band was the first to its feet and among the first to realize that the 'Glide was indeed the instrument in question. They turned toward that Harley and, as one, snapped to attention and saluted it; everybody else turned to face it, too. On hundreds of faces, there wasn't a flicker of skepticism. Well, Milwaukee, how many times have military forces and civilians—literally—stood saluting a Harley-Davidson? Such things can only happen when you're traveling with Malcolm. •

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IS AS PLAIN AS



They could see it as soon as I rode my new Suzuki Intruder into town. No other cruiser looks as custom. No other V-twin sounds this mean.

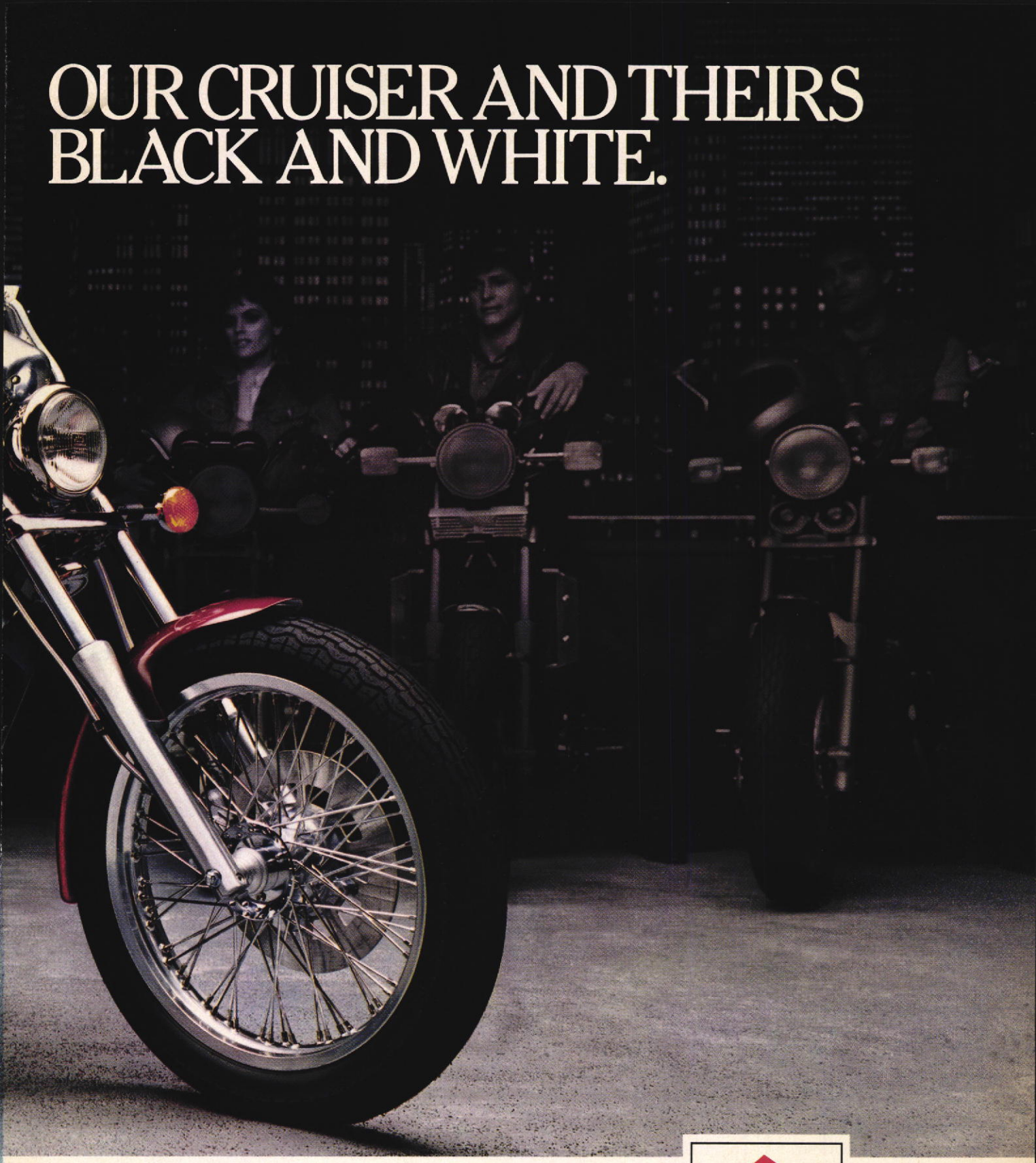
No other streetbike had ever grabbed their attention like my Intruder. Chrome on chrome on chrome. From its headlight right down to its 60-spoke wheels, Intruder is mean, clean and classic.

And underneath Intruder's heart-thumping good looks Suzuki packed the leanest 45° V-twin on the road.

That's what grabbed my soul. 'Cause when I'm riding my Intruder I become an Intruder. It's like we were made for each other. Like we're one single moving part.

Man, the difference between my Intruder and every other bike on the street is as plain as black and white.

OUR CRUISER AND THEIRS BLACK AND WHITE.



THE 1986 INTRUDER VS700GL: 699cc, 4-stroke, liquid-cooled, 45° V-twin, 8-valve TSCC. Maintenance-free automatic cam tensioners and electronic ignition. Low maintenance hydraulic clutch, smooth shaft-drive. Seat height, 27." Intruder is also available in black with flat or pullback handle bars.

Suzuki wants every ride to be a safe one. Always wear a helmet, eye protection and riding apparel. Call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-447-4700 for a riding course near you.

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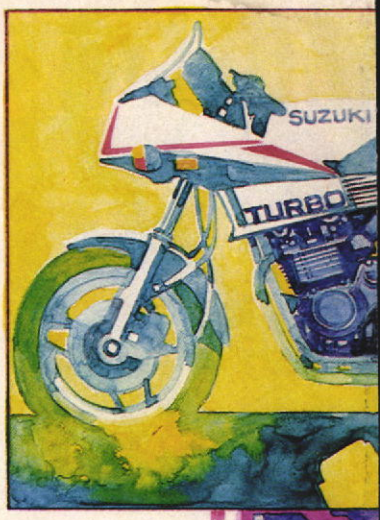
HIGH-TECH TRANSFER:

THE CROSS-FERTILIZATION OF ENGINE TECHNOLOGY

A technological swap-meet for two- and four-wheel engineers.

BY DON FULLER

ILLUSTRATIONS © 1986 HECTOR CADEMARTORI



Anyone wandering around the pits at Laguna Seca this past year might have been surprised to see the dark-blue Ford oval adorning Kenny Roberts' Yamaha OW81. Certainly, Ford Special Vehicle Operations' boss, Michael Kranefuss, has been high on Roberts' potential for racing on four wheels. But the real reason for the sticker's presence goes deeper into corporate suites than a mere appreciation of Roberts' talent, because within two model years, we'll see a production Ford powered by an exotic vee-six engine, researched and developed largely by Yamaha.

This kind of corporate exchange is fairly recent; for a long time the doors to the technological worlds of motorcycles and cars were considered closed to each other. From the late '60s and into the '80s, automotive and motorcycle engine technologies took divergent paths, and as a result, most people considered motorcycle engines to be more advanced than those in cars, due to the widespread use of dual overhead cams, multiple valve layouts and astronomical redlines. Actually, though, the technological frontier is a standoff. In accessory systems, such as fuel-injection, turbocharging controls and electronic engine management, car engineers are equally far ahead. Why? Because the two have been fighting different battles. Until recently, motorcycle engineers have been able to concentrate on performance, unfettered by governmental or societal constraints, while their automotive counterparts were doled out the responsibility for saving gas and keeping the air clean. So, DOHC and 10,000 rpm for one crowd, electronic engine management and 1 percent CO for the other. In general terms, motorcycle engineers have concentrated on engine *internals*, automotive engineers on the *externals*.

It took a long time before fuel efficiency, blue skies *and* blazing speed could be discussed in the same conversation. But now, the two technologies are coming together. And there's far more substance to it than just a Ford sticker on Roberts' OW81.

For example, the Yamaha-developed Ford vee-six is a done deal, nearing production status. Planned at least for the new Ford Taurus and Mercury Sable sedans, the engine reportedly sports double overhead cams and four valves per cylinder, and displaces three liters. Yamaha has a long association with Toyota, too, and builds all of Toyota's DOHC engines for the Japanese home market, and Toyota uses Yamaha-made parts for the same engines in export models. In addition, the two-liter DOHC, 16-valve, inline four in the 1986 Toyota Celica GT-S features a distinctive camshaft-bearing design that was first heard discussed by a Yamaha engineer.

There's more. Yamaha's going championship hunting, only this time on four wheels, with a two-liter, 30-valve, vee-six racing engine that uses the same five-valve technology found in Yamaha's FZ750. The vee-six will power a Formula 2 car, and, in fact, F-1 and F-2 traditionally have been two forms of automotive racing with the strongest motorcycling ties. In the past, BMW's four-cylinder dominated F-2, and certain features from that engine can be seen in the K100 and K75 engines. The current F-2 king is Honda's two-liter vee-six, which became a turbo 1.5-liter F-1 engine, and long before Honda became a major automobile manufacturer the company was heavily involved in automotive Formula 1.

Outside of racing, Honda, BMW and Suzuki each build complete motorcycles and cars. Japanese companies in particular are famous for moving engineers around within the corporations; the resultant technological crossover is a continual thing. Within Honda, the transfer—from cars to bikes to lawnmowers to generators to you name it—is pervasive. Sometimes it's obvious, as with a three-valve combustion chamber, for example; or it might be more subtle, such as a process that allows casting a ventilated brake rotor or intricate passages in an intake tract. But the crossover exists throughout Honda products.

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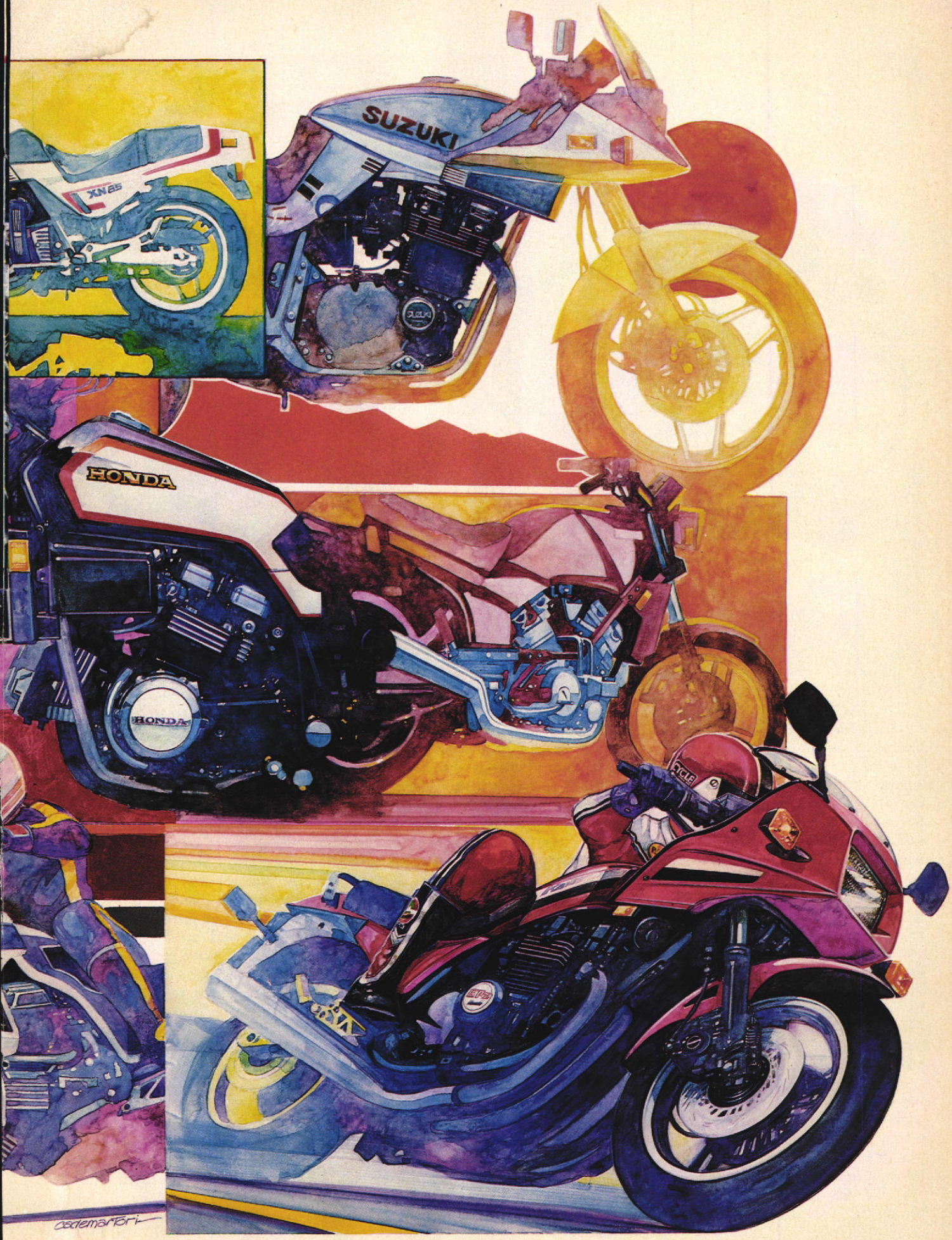
SUZUKI
XN85
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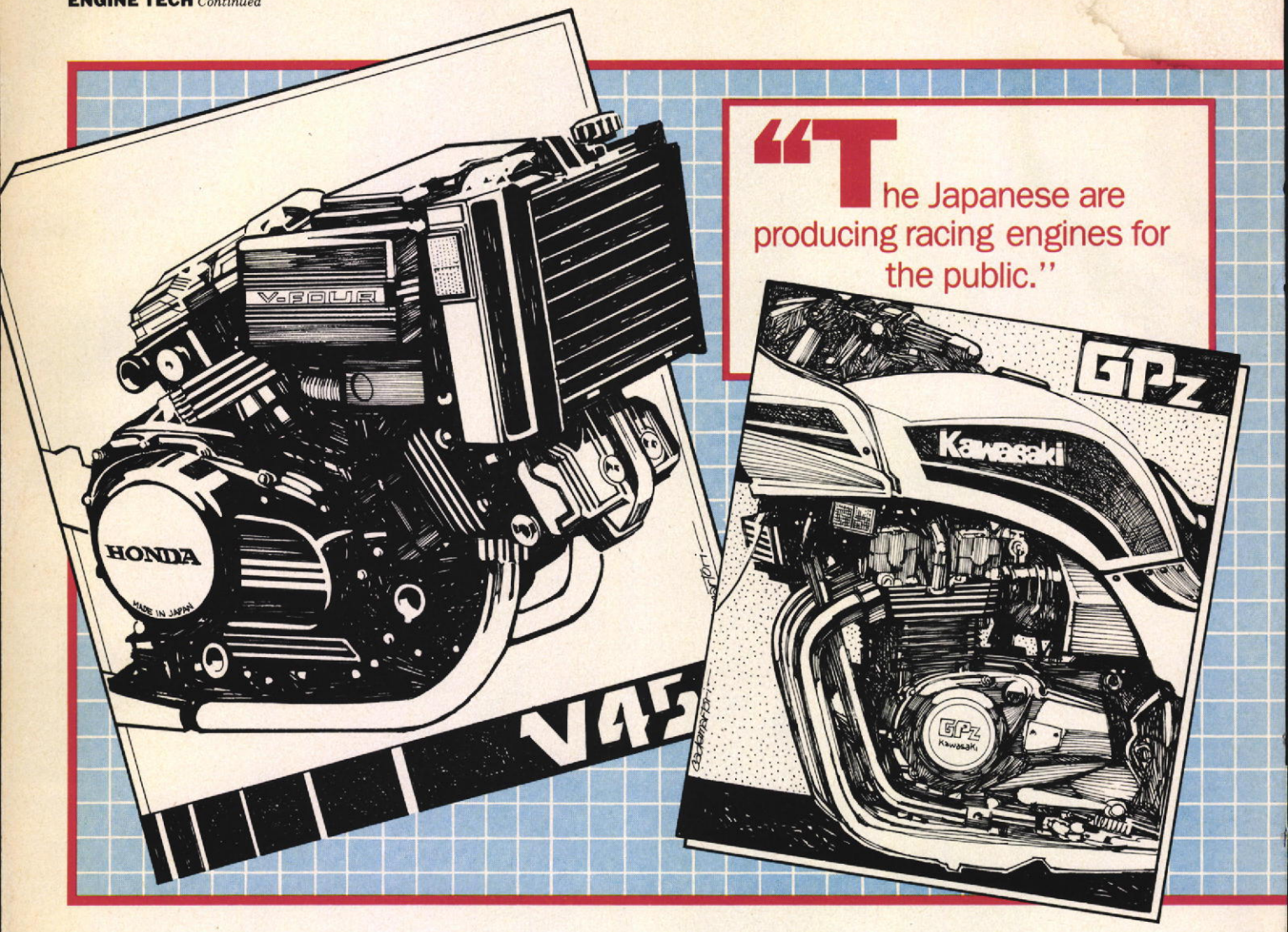


"The Japanese are producing racing engines for the public."

Such ties between cars and bikes aren't limited to the Japanese; Detroit's latest quest for horsepower accounts for a large amount of interest. Early in 1984, engineers with Buick's Special Products Group found a cooperative GM bean counter to sign a check for seven Japanese motorcycles: a Honda CB650, V45 Sabre and CX500 Turbo; Kawasaki GPz1100; Suzuki GS1100 Katana and XN85 Turbo; and Yamaha 550 Vision. Those bikes represented, purposely, not the fastest, biggest or nastiest, but a good cross-section of then-current Japanese engine technology. Included were inline fours and vee-twins, DOHC and pushrods, two and four valves per cylinder, air- and liquid-cooling, carburetors and fuel-injection, normally aspirated and turbocharged.

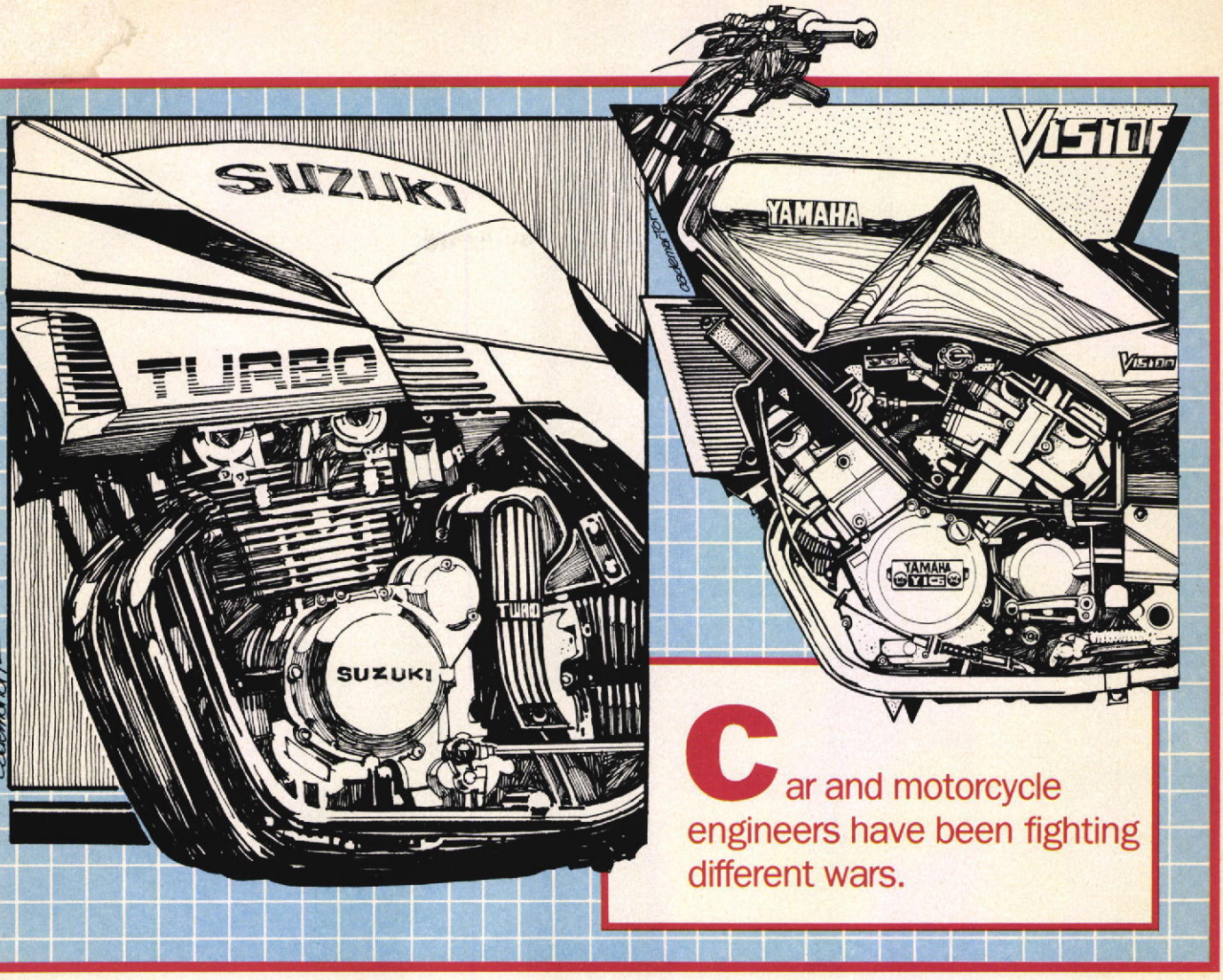
Now, Buick's SPG engineers are a knowledgeable lot. They are entrusted with Buick's race-engine program, which in 1985 put a Buick-powered March at the front of IMSA races and into the first two spots on the grid for the Indy 500. The SPG engineers know how to find horsepower.

They also know sophisticated technology, and knew their engines' externals—the accessory systems that trim emissions and save fuel—were equal to anyone's; they figured Japanese motorcycle engines would be a good place to find ideas on the internals. As explained by Ed Keating, SPG project engineer and one of the prime motivators on the project, there were two main areas of concern: First, they wanted to establish what Keating called a "designed content" for state-of-the-art motorcycle engines—configurations, layouts and component concepts. Second, they wanted to find out if there was any validity to the idea the Japanese were holding engine manufacturing tolerances closer than what has been generally accepted in American automotive practice.

The first part of this was a "blank page" investigation: simply seeing what existed. And what did they find? "In terms of exotic designs, there really wasn't anything," Keating said. Instead, he said, "the overwhelming impression was the excellent job the Japanese did in their motorcycles applying current technology. Nothing we could find was earth-shattering; it was all just executed into a very good total package."

By "packaging," Keating meant the Japanese had done an excellent job of minimizing overall engine size. And for a motorcycle the obvious benefits are smaller physical size, less internal and overall weight, higher revs, lower center of gravity, and improvements to both performance and handling. For a car, such packaging would provide the same benefits in weight, size, performance and handling, in addition to offering superior aerodynamics, due to a low hoodline.

The second part of Buick's search was a comparison with existing tolerance standards, which should not be confused with clearance. *Tolerance* refers to manufacturing precision; *clearance* refers to how closely mating parts fit to each other. The two terms, however, do have critical interplay in manufacturing. For example, a piston fits into a cylinder bore with a certain clearance, and there's an optimum dimension for best



Car and motorcycle engineers have been fighting different wars.

operating performance. If the manufacturing tolerances for the piston and cylinder bore are not held precisely, the design clearance will have to be adjusted so that, even in the worst case, the piston's fit still will be acceptable. The problem is, "acceptable" is usually far from "optimum," and engine performance is compromised as a result.

And as Buick discovered, tolerance was a critical factor in the bikes' performance: "Dimensionally, they were excellent; everything we looked at was very well done," said Keating. "I hate to say it," he continued, "but the engines we measured were better than what we would have expected from a random automobile." He went on: "I believe the reason (for this manufacturing precision) is they get so much power-per-liter they've got to be good to make them last. They are essentially producing racing engines for sale to the public, in terms of power-per-liter."

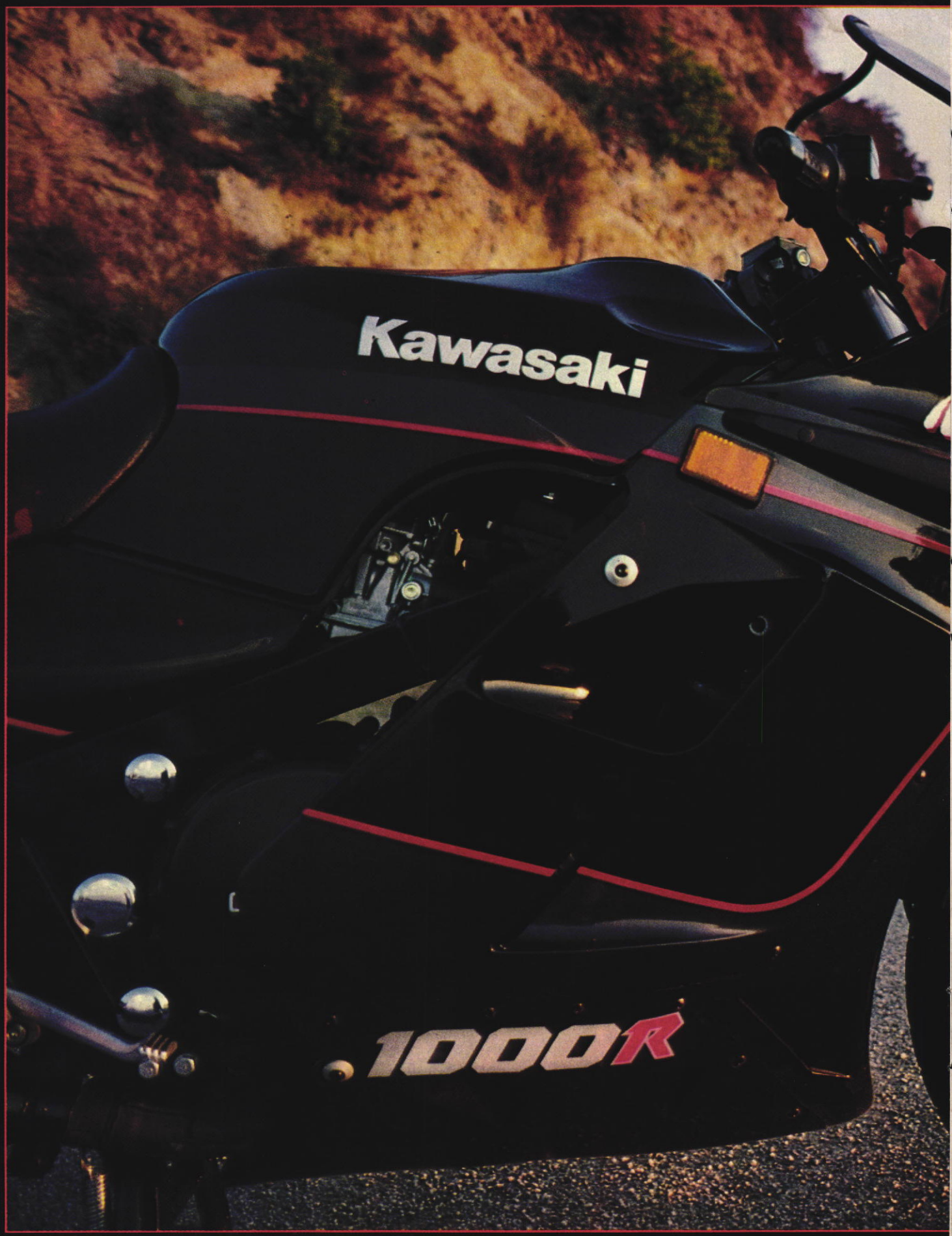
Indeed, almost any production Japanese motorcycle makes well over 100 horsepower per liter, and quite a few far above that. The best cars might approach 70–80, but then—with *very* few exceptions—only with turbocharging and intercooling; 40 or 50 horsepower per liter is more typical. And then there's the matter of the operator; a motorcyclist is more likely to be an enthusiast, ready to romp on the throttle, while most people in cars are worried primarily about getting to work on time. The motorcycle engine, in short, had better be up to the demands, because the operator is more likely to be demanding.

Ultimately, though, what has set automotive and motorcycle engines apart is more than Saturday go-fast or Monday commute. "We're looking at a whole different range of constraints and objectives compared to the motorcycle people," Keating said, summing up the real-world view. While the car guys were going toe-to-toe with the feds, smog and OPEC, the bike guys were out on the dragstrip, having fun. They simply have been fighting different wars.

But that scenario is changing. Performance in cars is making a grand return, with smaller, higher-revving engines. Motorcycles are faced with noise and emissions restrictions similar to those the car people have already dealt with, and which, predictably, will continue to stiffen. Many of the engineering and technological battles have already been fought and won, and the answers are available to anyone, just for the asking.

As it turns out, both camps can—and will—gain from each other's proven efforts. Automotive engines of the future will include configurations tried and tested on motorcycles. Future motorcycle powerplants will include electronic management systems developed on cars. Thus, by borrowing existing technologies, automotive performance engines will be better sooner, and emissions and fuel-economy-regulated motorcycles will be more agreeable sooner. In the end, the cross-fertilization not only will save time and effort, it will provide better rides for four-wheelers and two-wheelers alike.

In fact, you someday might be able to buy a Ford—with a Yamaha sticker gracing *its* flanks. •


Kawasaki
1000R

ROAD TEST:

Kawasaki Ninja 1000R

Muscling up to the hard and fast sporting club.

BY MARC COOK

Kawasaki wasn't about to have sand kicked in its face. Admittedly, ever since the 900 Ninja's introduction in 1984, Kawasaki has played the underdog in the hyperbike competition, giving away more than 200cc to some of its rivals. But the firm's sporting flagship rarely found itself playing the role of the 98-pound weakling. Instead, its lean chassis and racebike-replica focus com-

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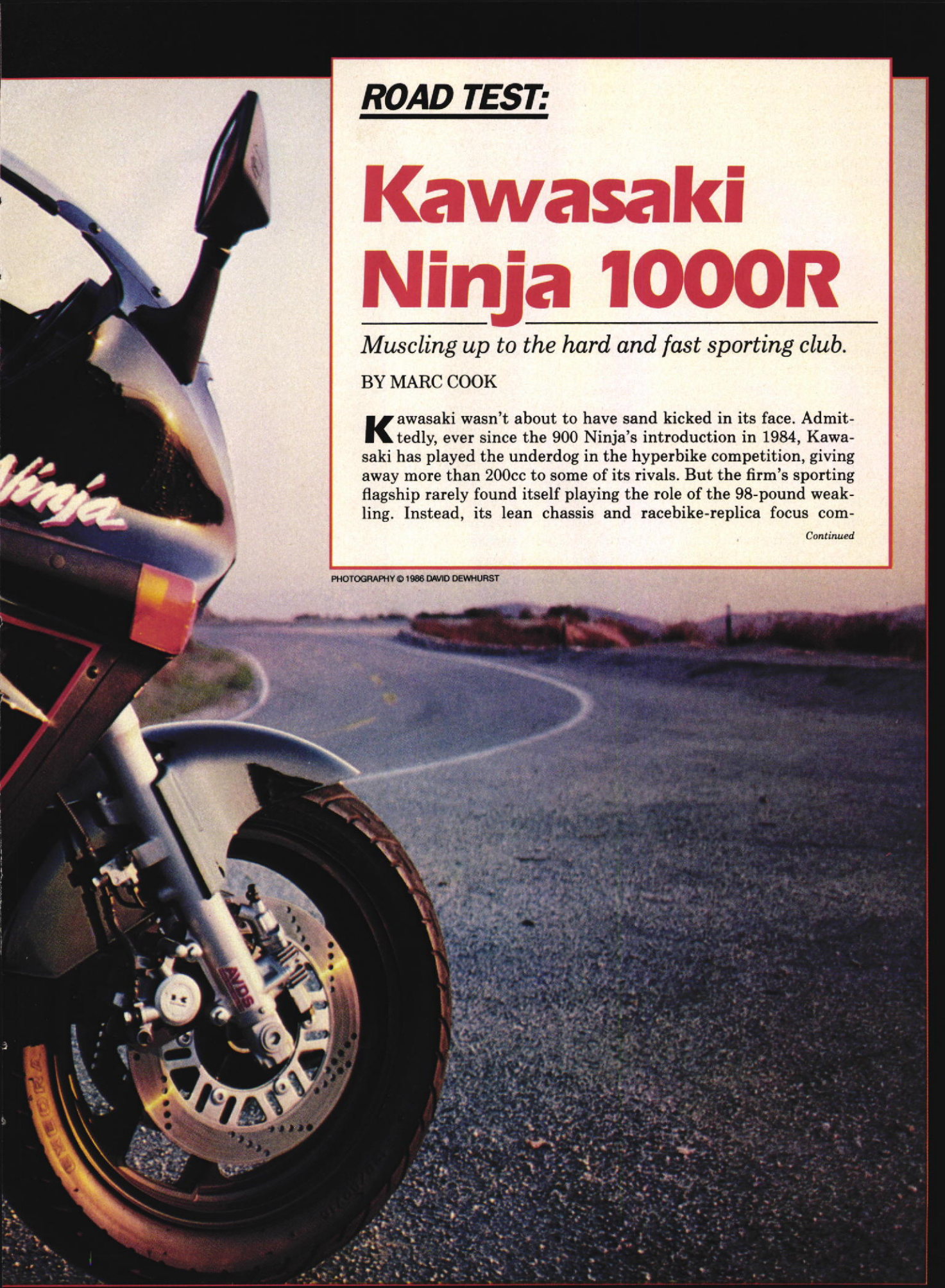


bined with its potent engine to provide performance others could match only with greater displacement. Kawasaki was smug about the Ninja's giant-killer prowess, too, claiming that a light, powerful bike could go up against brute force and finish in the money.

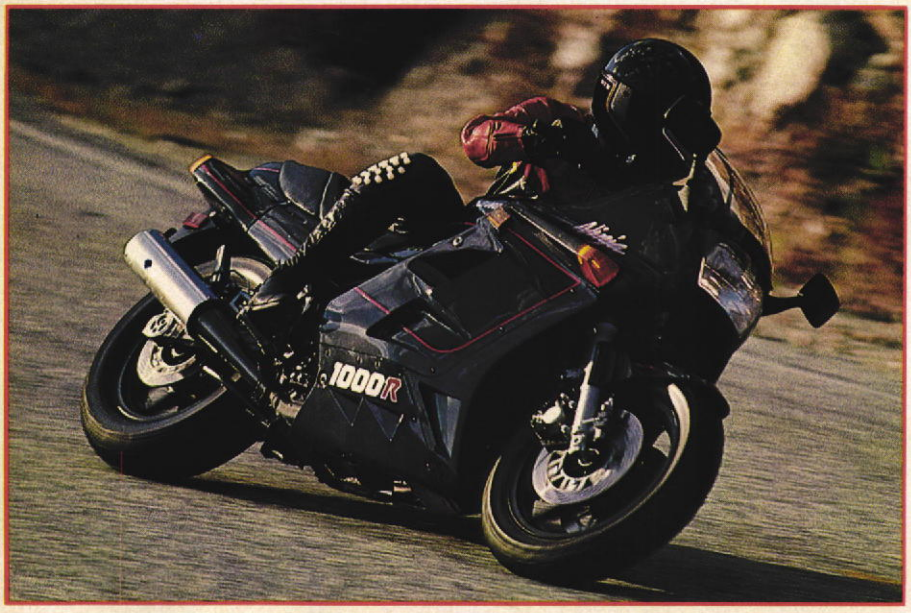
But now there's competition such as Yamaha's FJ1200 and Suzuki's GSX-R1100 flexing for the literbike crown, and against those heavy-hitters Kawasaki felt the little Ninja just might be outclassed. So, like the underdeveloped kid who sent away for Charles Atlas' protein mix, Kawasaki sent the Ninja to the weight room for a muscle-building program that makes Arnold Schwarzenegger's daily workout seem like a couple of easy sets.

Both the engine and chassis went through a complete bulking-up, and when the dust settled and the last barbell was set aside, Kawasaki had the 1000R Ninja, a bike with bulging, rippling muscles, boasting a claimed 123 horsepower, a new, broad-beamed full fairing and a burly 150-section rear tire. The body-buiding program put a few pounds on the bike, too, making the 1000R weigh in at 564 pounds, 29 more than the 900 Ninja. Kawasaki says that extra heft—part of which comes from a new frame and redesigned fairing—represented a worthwhile concession in order to give the bike a suitable platform from which to flex its liter-sized muscle. And the fact that Kawasaki was willing to give up the 900 Ninja's lithe, gymnastlike qualities to go after the big guns underlines just how serious the firm is.

Pumping the 1000R's power output to chest-stretching proportions removed little of the 900 Ninja's high-winding character, though. Like the 900, the R stores most of its power in the midrange and top-end, and the motor's low-end performance isn't as potent as that of other literbikes. Once above 3000 rpm, though, the motor starts building to a Joe Weider-sized midrange, accompanied by a delicious intake roar. From there, power builds smoothly, culminating in a ferocious top-end rush that doesn't slack off even past the 10,500-rpm redline. That power propels the Ninja down the quarter-mile in a breathtaking 10.994-second burst, 0.18 second quicker than the 900.

More than just out-flexing the 900, the Ninja's motor has become more broadband with its increased muscle. Its midrange power means you won't have to perform quick repetitions on the shift lever to stay with torque-laden literbikes like Suzuki's GS1150E, for example. Top-gear roll-ons from 60 mph bear that out, too: Depite its smaller displacement, the R almost stays with the GS initially, yet when the Ninja hits its midrange stride, the big Kawasaki catches the Suzuki and forces its way past. The Ninja's widened powerband also benefits its sporting performance by offering grip-clenching thrust at a lower rpm than was the case with the 900, with considerably more on top, as well. You'll want to use the bike's prodigious power carefully in midturn, though, because there's enough power on tap as low as 4500 rpm to slew the massive rear tire at will.

Kawasaki massaged that level of power from the 998cc liquid-cooled inline four using techniques right from the pages of the horsepower training manual. For starters, the engine received both a 1.5mm larger bore and 3.0mm longer stroke, to net a 90cc increase over the



900's dimensions. With those changes come new, flat-top pistons and stronger piston pins; the compression ratio dropped, though, from 11.0:1 to 10.2:1, a curious departure from the engine's body-building program. Kawasaki also fitted 2mm-larger Keihin semi-flat-slide carbs, now tilted 15 degrees from horizontal in place of the 900's 5 degree slant, to give the fuel charge a straighter shot into the cylinders. Those carbs mount to a new airbox that draws cool, dense air from behind the steering head via two insulated ducts. On the exhaust side, the header pipes' (stainless steel for '86) diameter increased 3.1mm from 900 specs, and muffler volume increased, as well.

While the Ninja's top end attended aerobic classes to improve its breathing

capacity, the bottom end got a weight training course to handle the additional power. The 1000R engine does use the same crankcases as the 900, and has identical external dimensions, but inside lies a stouter driveline that includes beefed up connecting rods and a larger clutch with a GPz1100 basket and two additional plates. The 1000R's gearbox is more robust, too, thanks to a new polishing process used on third through sixth gears. Kawasaki also undercut the dogs on third through sixth gear—fifth and sixth were already undercut in the 900—for more positive shifting action. Nonetheless, the 1000R's shifting is notchier than is the case with the 900, and requires more lever-effort.

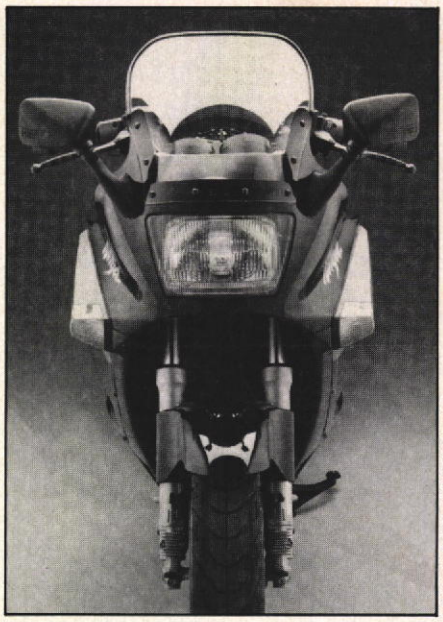
Still, shortcomings with the Ninja's shifting don't amount to a damning trait, largely because the 1000R doesn't demand extensive gearbox choreography. And most riders will find that the 1000R's less-demanding powerband makes the bike easier to ride at wild-eyed canyon speeds than the 900, what with its cammier power delivery. The 1000R eases the rider's workload in another way, too, by offering up agility that belies its size and heft. Kawasaki altered the steering geometry for the R, reducing the steering head angle by 1 degree to 28, and shortening trail by 6mm to 108mm, to help offset the effect the bike's extra poundage would have on steering response. And those changes work wonders: At speeds above 10 mph, the R seems to shed weight, giving its steering a considerably lighter feel than that of the 900 Ninja—a welcome trait out on twisty pavement. What's more, the Ninja flicks into corners effortlessly, and cooperates completely during line changes and midcorner braking.

Those geometry changes take their toll on stability, however, making the 1000R feel less stable than the rock-solid 900 Ninja. At triple-digit speeds through even moderately bumpy sweepers, the R doesn't feel as well planted as the smaller Ninja. The R's suspension amplifies that trait, too, because it lacks compliance over small bumps and occasionally chatters the front tire off line. On the other hand, the stiffish suspension communicates precisely what the excellent Bridgestone tires are doing, and provides the same taut, racerlike impressions the 900 Ninja imparted.

Continued

Full fairing's bulges conceal a beefed-up motor and burly chassis

Kawasaki's full-bore training program yielded Schwarzenegger muscle—and size.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

Rakish fairing shows aerodynamic touches

Part of the 162-mph equation.

You can credit the new full-cradle frame for much of the Ninja's racebike feel. Kawasaki borrowed the concept for R's frame design from the 600 Ninja; the 1000's frame uses large rectangular steel tubes that run from a heavily gussetted steering head to just above the swingarm pivot, widening to clear the engine's cylinder head. But, like the 900, the 1000R uses a box-section aluminum subframe. Kawasaki says the R's full-cradle frame offers more structural rigidity than the 900's diamond-type unit, and because the engine is no longer used as a stressed member, the front motor mounts could be isolated in rubber.

Accompanying the redesigned frame is an all-new Uni-Trak rear suspension. The setup mounts one end of the single air-spring shock to the swingarm, and the other end to a bellcrank system, much like Suzuki's street-going Full-Floater suspensions in that the shock is compressed from both ends. Kawasaki claims the new Uni-Trak better protects its linkage by positioning it above the swingarm, further away from water and road debris. In addition to altering the linkage, Kawasaki made the shock's spring slightly stiffer and gave it more preload. Further, compression damping has been increased from 900 specs, while the four rebound-damping settings bracket the smaller Ninja's; the 1000's No. 1 setting is firmer than the 900's and No. 4 is softer.

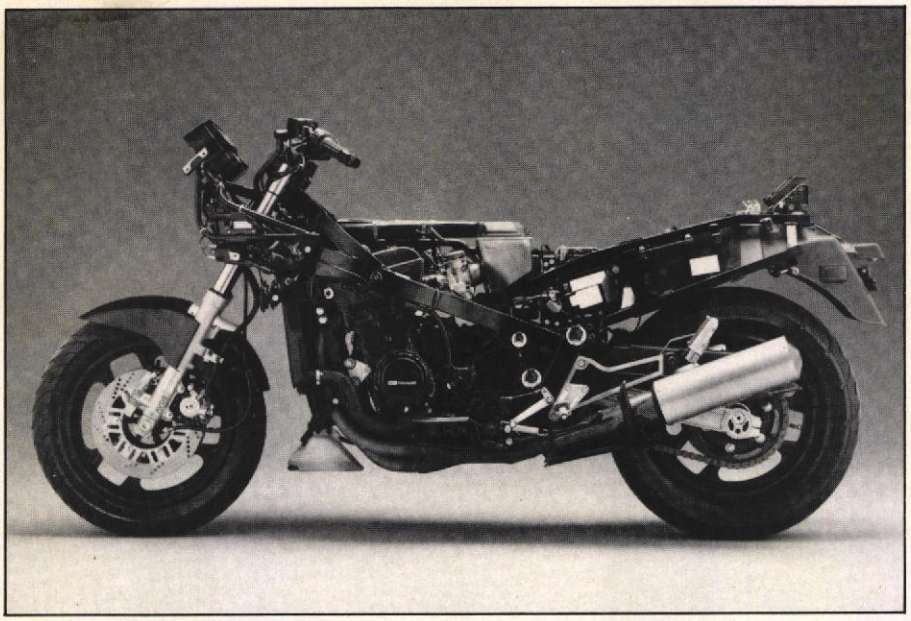
Up front, the Ninja's Kayaba air-spring fork got its turn at the Nautilus machine, pumping its stanchion tubes from 38mm to 40mm diameter. Internally, the fork uses single-rate springs in place of the 900's dual-rate items, but the resulting overall spring rate is stiffer. Moreover, the fork's Automatic Variable Damping System—which alters compression damping according to both slider speed and position—increases damping more than it does on the 900. What's more, the hydraulic anti-dive units have been tuned to activate at a lower lever-pressure than the 900's. And the Ninja's brakes have been toned up, as well. Although the three single-action calipers are straight from the 900, the pads have a higher metal content, which Kawasaki claims increases stopping power and extends pad life.

Those changes improve the R's braking performance over the 900's by a considerable margin, too. The front brake, in particular, provides exceptional stopping power, precise feel and instant-on characteristics matched by few others. In fact, in panic stops from 60 mph, the R stopped in a remarkably short 118 feet, 13 feet less than the 900 Ninja's best. Likewise, the changes made to the anti-dive also net improvement: They now limit initial fork compression during hard stops more successfully than do the 900's units.

In other respects, though, Kawasaki's suspension work wasn't as successful. Set up for fast canyon-work—with the fork pumped to 6 psi (5.7–7.1 psi range), and the shock set at 15 psi (0–21 psi range) and No. 4 rebound damping—the 1000R responds well to medium and large bumps, but lets sharp, square-edged jolts get straight through. At the same time,

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

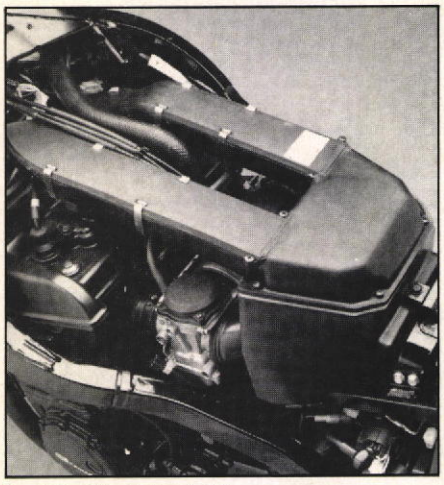
Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Kawasaki Ninja 1000R-'86	10.994/125.69	162	564	118
Kawasaki 900 Ninja-'85	11.175/123.79	151	535	131
Honda VF1000R-'85	11.308/121.78	149	578	135
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	11.032/121.78	146	529	138
Yamaha FJ1100-'85	11.002/123.28	147	543	138
Yamaha V-Max-'85	10.922/127.47	151	596	137



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

Ninja's full-cradle frame and redesigned Uni-Trak depart from 900 practice

But the 900's style of giant-killer horsepower remains.



Insulated ducts feed airbox

A long reach for power-rich cool air.

those settings yield wheel rates soft enough to let the bike squat under hard acceleration and bottom on large dips. The suspension, then, forces a compromise: To make the best of the Ninja's plentiful cornering clearance, you have to endure a rough, harsh ride, yet tuning the suspension for more compliance lets the bike bottom too easily.

The same lack of suspension compliance undermines the Ninja's performance on the open road, too. Even with the fork and shock bled to 0 psi, and shock rebound damping set to No. 1, the bike responds to expansion joints with sharp jabs. And, because the low-rise handlebars force the rider to support much of his upper body weight on his wrists and hand, every bump feels like it gets past the fork practically full strength. That's unfortunate, too, because the saddle is positively plush for a sportbike, and little vibration gets to the rider. With taller handlebars and more compliant suspension, the 1000 Ninja could be an honest-to-God sport-tourer—albeit one with sporting teeth.

Still, those teeth can't compare with the 900's fangs when it comes to outright, pegs-to-the-pavement sporting ability. By comparison, the 1000R's character is more sporty than it is sporting, and beady-eyed, sweaty-palmed backroad bandits will prefer the 900 Ninja. But almost every sport-related shortcoming pales when you snap open the throttle and experience the Ninja's adrenaline-pumping acceleration. The motor is the message here, and it comes through loud and clear. So you can look at the 1000R as a grown-up, built-up 900, the next logical step in the Ninja's evolution, but you'd be missing the point. The 1000R is far more than simply the next step: It's Kawasaki's strongest contender for King of Musclebike Beach. •

Nits:

- Mirrors offer insufficient view of the area directly behind the bike.
- Screwdriver needed to remove sidecover, in order to gain access to shock adjustments.
- Two-piece seat requires removal of both halves to get to the toolkit.

Picks:

- Fork tubes interconnected for air adjustment.
- Cam-type adjusters automatically maintain rear wheel alignment during chain adjustment.

Ride Review

• Bigger isn't always better, especially when it comes to sportbikes, and whenever a manufacturer makes an existing model "bigger and better," I automatically cringe. So as I watched our shop scales groaning under the weight of the beefy 1000R, I imagined the virtues I appreciate in the 900 Ninja—sure-footed agility, lightning acceleration and eyeball-popping braking—disappearing like last week's paycheck.

But the 1000R not only lives up to the 900's legend, it adds substantially to it. The big Ninja seems to shed 100 pounds as soon as the road gets twisty, the engine's hearty midrange provides acceleration that will suck the headlight out of the 900, and its front brake can stand the bike on its nose. To me, the 1000 Ninja is not merely bigger and better, it's the *best* big-bore sportbike on the road.

—Jerry Smith

• As CYCLE GUIDE's resident Ninja owner—folks around here call me "Ninjarelli"—all eyes turned my way when the 1000R arrived. Is it, they asked, better than the 900? Well, yes—and no. Despite toting an additional 29 pounds, the liter-version is faster and easier to steer than the 900, and has even more stopping power. In the way it delivers me to corners, then, it's a better sportbike than the original Ninja. But the 1000R's excess poundage denies the new Ninja sporting status above the 900. In my book, a sportbike is supposed to be both fleet-footed *and* lightweight.

And so, the final question: Would I buy a 1000R or stick with the Original? I'm inclined to go with the 1000R, for no other reason than its styling. Simply put, the 1000R looks aggressive—the way I think a Ninja should. *—Dain Gingerelli*

• What we have here is a failure to communicate. Now, I have sat in on the tech briefings, I have read the press kits and I have ridden the motorcycle in question, but I cannot for the life of me figure out exactly where within the grand scheme of motorcycling Kawasaki's Ninja 1000R fits. It's obviously no cruiser—even I can see that. Is it a sportbike? Kawasaki says it is, but it's too big and heavy to replace the 900 Ninja as my favorite big-bore backroad weapon. Is it a sport-tourer? Well, perhaps, but it's not comfortable enough to make me forget Yamaha's FJ1200. An all-around, general-purpose bike? Let's not be silly; it's much too sporting for that.

No, I have thought on it until I've made myself dizzy, and decided that enough is enough. Kawasaki, when you figure it out, give me a call.

—Charles Everitt

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Kawasaki Ninja 1000R — street

IMPORTER: Kawasaki Motors Corp., 2009 E. Edinger Ave., Santa Ana, California 92711

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $5099

ENGINE

Type . . . . . liquid-cooled four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 74.0mm x 58.0mm
Displacement 997.8cc
Compression ratio 10.2:1
Engine redline . . . . . 10,500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 36mm Keihin semi-flat-slide constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 350-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 1.732:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . #632 O-ring chain (3/4-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.733:1 (41/15) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.800	13.257	5.68
II	2.000	9.469	7.96
III	1.591	7.532	10.00
IV	1.333	6.313	11.94
V	1.154	5.463	13.79
VI	1.036	4.904	15.36

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Kayaba, 40mm stanchion tube diameter, 3-position adjustable hydraulic anti-dive/4.5 in. (114mm)
Rear . . . . . Kayaba air-spring shock, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/5.1 in. (129mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.9-in. (278mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 10.2-in. (258mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 120/90V16 Bridgestone Exedra G527 tubeless
Rear . . . . . 150/80V16 Bridgestone Exedra G528 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

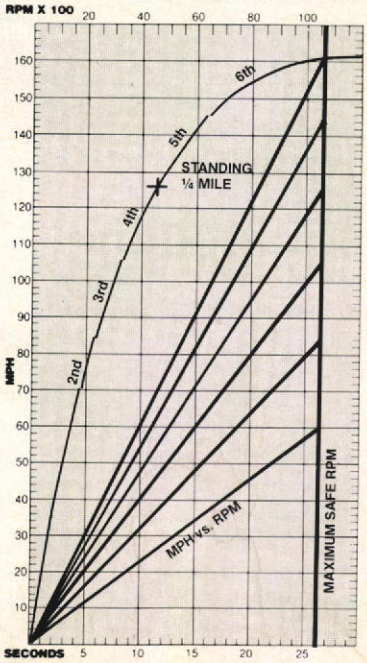
Weight . . . . . 564 lbs. (255.8kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 48.3% front, 51.7% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 987 lbs. (448kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 389 lbs. (176kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 58.9 to 60.1 in. (1495 to 1526mm)
Seat height . . . . . 31.8 in. (808mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 26.8 in. (680mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.7 in. (349mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.5 in. (140mm), lower cowling
Steering head angle . . . . . 28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.25 in. (108mm)
Frame . . . . . mainframe of box-section mild-steel tubing; rear subframe of box-section aluminum tubing; double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 4.2 qt. (4.0/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.6 gal. (21.2/), including 1.1 gal. (4.3/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, voltmeter, fuel gauge, coolant temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 33 to 44 mpg (14 to 19 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 38 mpg (16 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 182 to 246 miles (293 to 396km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 36 to 48 miles (58 to 77km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 27 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 49 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 10.994 sec., 125.69 mph (202 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 162 mph (261 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 26 ft. (7.9m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 118 ft. (36.0m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Firecracker Red/Metallic Black, Ebony/Pearl Cosmic Grey



All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Frank Thomas FT12 Road Racer Boots

Works footwear for the street.

• You wouldn't expect to commute on Freddie Spencer's NSR500, so why should you wear roadrace boots on the street? Besides, many racer-special boots are constructed from lightweight leather and have wafer-thin soles, resulting in a lack of both support and insulation that are almost mandatory for day-to-day use. At the same time, though, roadracing boots offer excellent control-feel and the flexibility necessary to hang off easily. Well, Frank Thomas understands the lure of roadrace boots, and, to bridge the gap between racing and street wear, offers the FT12 Road Racer boot.

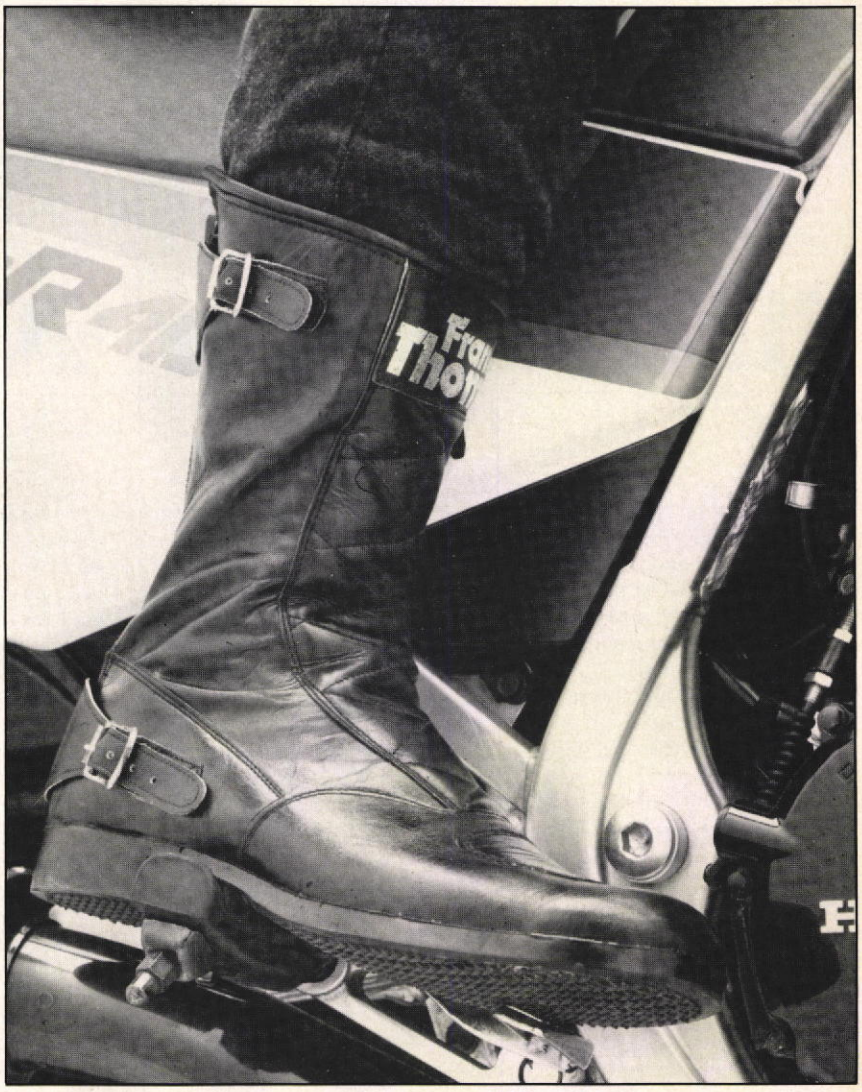
The Road Racers' elusive combination of racer-savvy and street-stamina comes from thicker, stiffer leather than that used for many racing boots. In addition, the FT12s feature padding and double-layer leather over the shins (extending from the top of the boot to the shift pad) and a second layer also surrounds the heel. The heavy leather and widespread use of double layers make the FTs feel far sturdier than a pure racing boot, and the snug fit around the ankles and calves reinforces the feeling. At the rear, a massive, full-length YKK zipper and wide-leather buckled straps top and bottom also contribute to the impression of stoutness. The straps and buckles are mostly cosmetic, though, because even at the buckles' tightest position, they aren't any tighter than the zipper.

Still, the FT12s fit plenty snug—especially during break-in. For about the first 12 hours of wear, the padded shin is prohibitively stiff, and restricts ankle movement much like a pair of plastic ski boots. Once broken-in, though, the shin padding merely feels thick, and gives good ankle support without hindering foot movement. The FT12s' pliant soles won't get in your way, either, because they afford good control-feel, and the raised-triangle pattern provides traction both on footpegs and pavement. What's more, the leather in the vamp of the boot is especially soft, for excellent shift-lever feel. In short, the FT12s feel every bit as flexible and unobtrusive as racing boots when you're really hustling.

And when you're commuting to-and-from your favorite backroad, the FTs work equally well. Although the FT12s aren't lined or insulated, they'll keep your feet warmer and drier in inclement weather than pure racing boots would. The boots are comfortable, too, thanks to the soles' vibration-damping characteristics and the snug, compliant fit. And when your trip is over, you'll find the FTs pleasant to walk in: They feel almost as natural as a pair of dress shoes.

There are trade-offs with the FT12s, though. The finish scuffs easily, for example, especially where the shift-lever touches the boot. Also, the soles wear quickly: After three months' use, most of the file-like pattern had worn away. Those are relatively minor complaints, though, considering the FT12s' utility for daily use, and their race-boot feel and flexibility. That's a combination that makes the FT12s useful for weekday commuting *and* weekend apex-strafing—even if you don't ride an NSR500. —*Marc Cook*

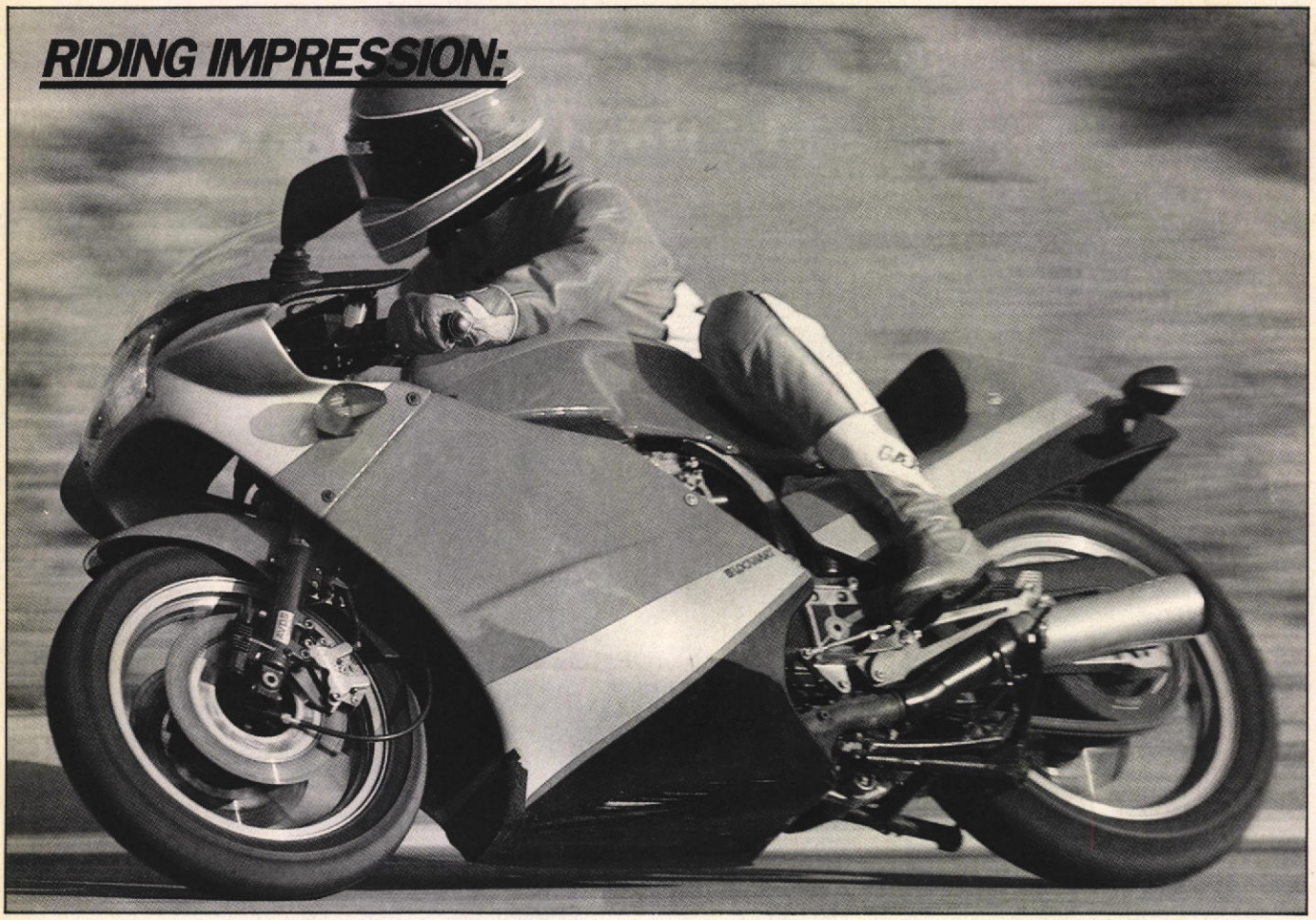
Frank Thomas FT12 Road Racer boots
Importer: Redwood Cycle Scene, P.O. Box 3192, Santa Rosa, California 95402
Suggested retail price: $99.95
Available colors: black, blue and red
Available sizes: Mens 4–13



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

Frank Thomas Road Racer boots feature racy styling and compliant soles

Fast-track footwear that makes sense on the street.



Nico Bakker 900 Ninja

Kawasaki's road warrior goes Dutch.

• It all depends on your point of view. Look at Kawasaki's 900 Ninja, and what do you see? A supremely capable sporting instrument, an agile, willing partner for high-speed backroad attacks, and 151-mph fast? Perhaps. But some riders might not be so impressed, instead seeing potential greatness hobbled by street-going accoutrements that dull the Ninja's sporting intent—a bike that promises much, but falls short of delivering.

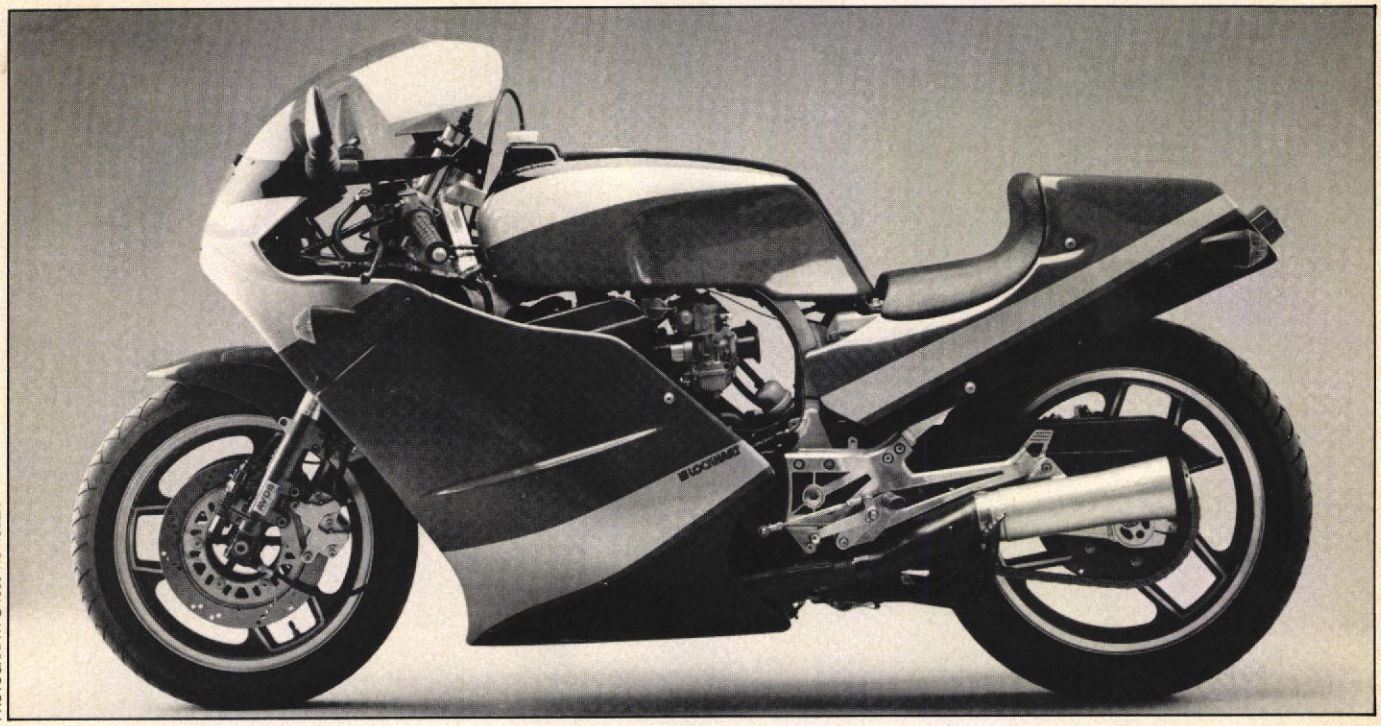
If that's your point of view, take heart; it's the same one shared by Dutch framebuilder extraordinaire Nico Bakker. Well-known among Europe's sporting cognoscenti, Bakker's frames can be found in Grand Prix roadracing in the 80cc, 250cc and 500cc classes; he might not be as well known to Americans as some other frame makers, but his credentials glitter just as brightly. And his creation for the 900 Ninja reflects the same single-purpose, uncompromising sensibilities you'd expect from a racebike.

In this country, Bakker's creation is sold as a kit through Lockhart, 15717 Texaco St., Paramount, California 90723. And for $2995 you get a beautifully wrought, square-tube aluminum frame, a fiberglass full fairing and tail section finished in white gel-coat, a saddle, a quartz-halogen headlight with clear-plastic cover, a windscreen, an aluminum gas tank with an aircraft-type quick-filler, and clip-on handlebars. To that package you add a bushelbasket-full of Ninja parts, including engine, suspension systems, wheels and tires, footpegs and controls; you'll also have to come up with mirrors and a taillight to complete the job.

Or, if you're Wendell Phillips, president of Lockhart, with an entire accessory company at your disposal, you start raiding the shelves. Phillips added a rack of 33mm Keihin CR Special carbs to replace the stock 34mm Keihins, a Works Performance rear shock and spring, Performance Machine four-piston front brake calipers, Watari rearsets and Supertrapp mufflers. Phillips' bike is the one you see here, and it's his rolling billboard for the Bakker kit.

The heart of the kit, though, is unquestionably the aluminum frame. Artistically rendered, the frame employs two widely spaced, well-triangulated backbone tubes that curve up from the swingarm pivot to the top of the steering head. A pair of short downtubes run from the steering head to the top motor mounts, and a host of short tubes ties the structure together. The frame duplicates a stock Ninja's steering geometry (29 degree steering head angle, 114mm of trail), yet slices almost 1.5 inches from the wheelbase and shifts weight distribution strongly toward the front end: 51 percent front/49 percent rear vs. the stocker's 49/51 bias. Moreover, the aluminum frame helps pare a whopping 43 pounds off the stocker's 535-pound dry weight.

And you can feel the difference between the Bakker Ninja and a stocker in the very first corner you carve through. In one respect, the Bakker bike's steering feels much like a racebike's—very precise, direct and sure. But the Bakker Ninja's steering is also heavy and slow to respond if you're not getting with the program. The bike forces you to *ride* like a racer, and that means attacking the corners, snapping the motorcycle in decisively from vertical mode to desired



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

lean angle, all in one swift, fluid motion. If you search for the lean angle and bank gradually into a turn, the bike feels heavy and unresponsive at the helm. And that goes double in tight corners; again, the key is to be smooth and decisive, cranking the thing over and rolling on the throttle at the apex. No matter how you do it, though, the Bakker Ninja demands concentration, and burns up a rider's energy reserves quickly. Still, the reward for getting it just right is a richly satisfying ride, with kinesthetics you'll only get on a for-real racebike.

Such steering characteristics might seem surprising, considering the bike's shorter wheelbase and lighter weight, compared to a stock Ninja. But those dimensions can't overcome the effects of the forward weight bias, low-leverage clip-ons and the wide, sticky Michelin Hi-Sport on the front of Phillips' bike. Yet while the bike's ledger sheet shows a debit in terms of agility, the chassis pays handsome dividends in stability. Triple-digit-speed sweepers are the

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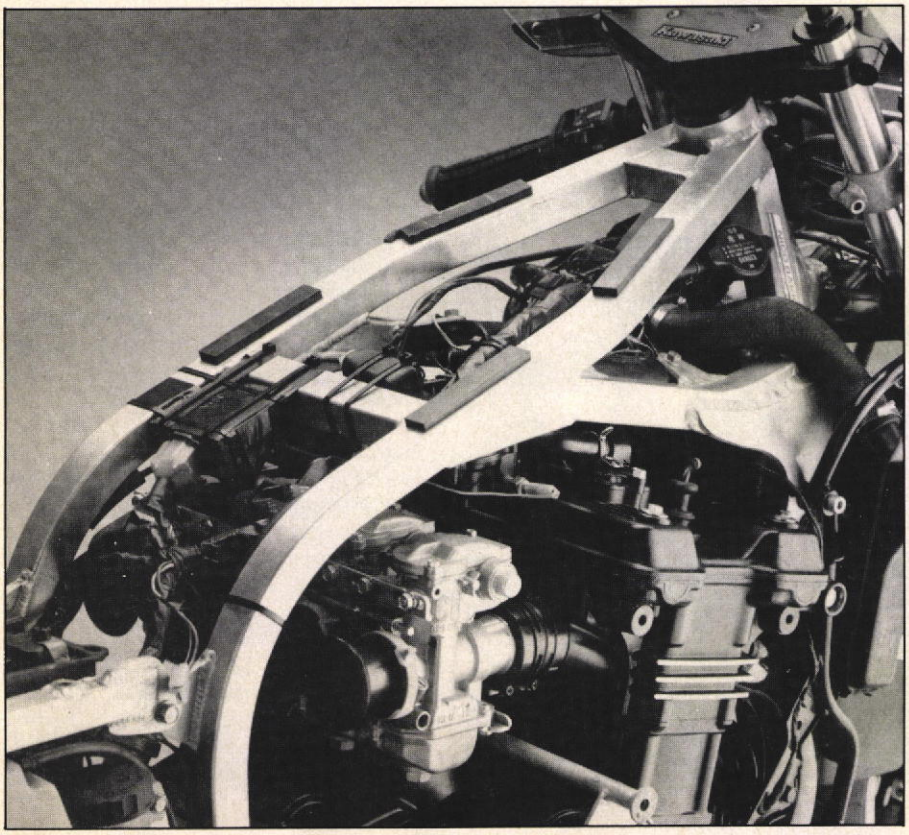
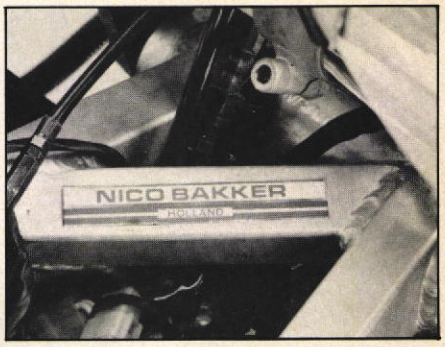
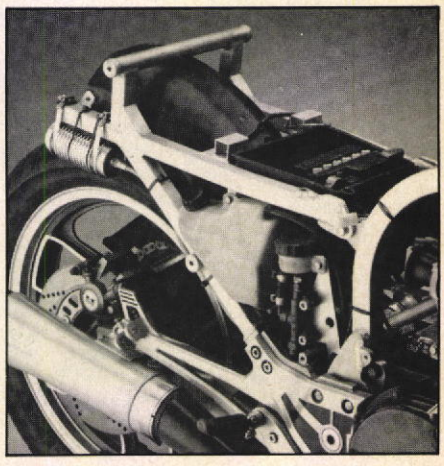


Dutch treat: Nico Bakker frame makes full use of stock Ninja parts

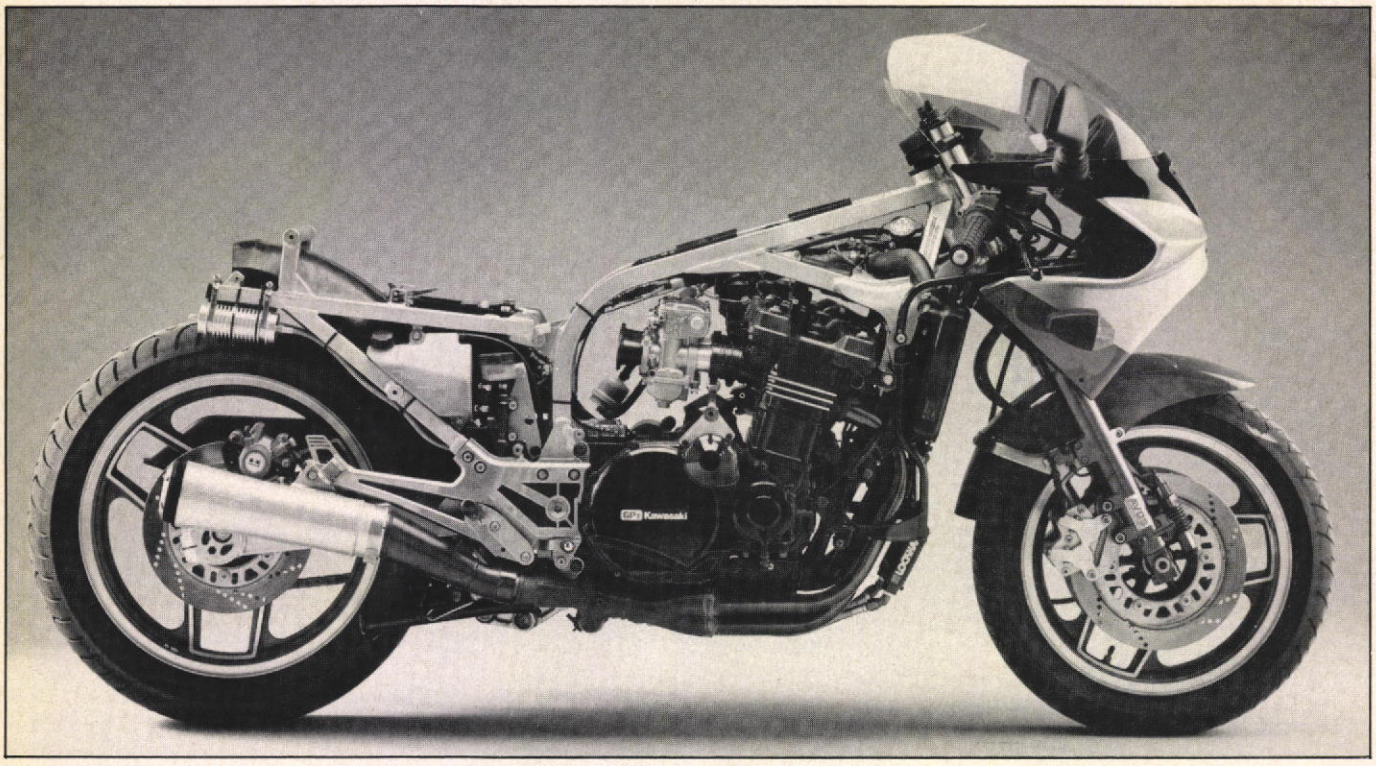
To create a fiercer road warrior that thrives on sheer speed.





900-style bolt-on subframe

Lightweight latticework built for speed.



Box-section aluminum bridgework with double top tubes distinguish Bakker frame

But it still uses the engine as a stressed member, and retains the stocker's steering geometry.

Bakker bike's playground, and it blazes through them in a way that few other motorcycles can, including a stock 900 Ninja. Indeed, at an indicated 140 mph, the Bakker bike tracks with uncanny precision, feeling like a part of the pavement, whereas a stock Ninja feels distinctly loose at that speed and is beginning to weave.

Obviously, this motorcycle needs near-racing speeds to keep it—and its pilot—happy. And nowhere is that more apparent than in town or on the freeway. In those environments, the Bakker Ninja's ergonomics would make a member of the Inquisition weep for joy; the footpeg position folds a rider's legs up under him, and it's a long stretch over the gas tank to the clip-ons, mounted two-thirds of the way down between the triple clamps. Moreover, calling the saddle board-hard insults the board, and the Works Performance shock on Phillips' bike is way too stiff for normal street riding; even small paving imperfections jar the rider clear off the seat. At the go-to-jail speeds the bike was meant for, though, the stiff suspension and full-race riding position seem right and natural. At 100 mph and beyond, the wind blast coming off the bubble provides a cushion for the rider to lean into, easing the load on his wrists and hands, and the bike feels completely at home. Life—aboard the Bakker Ninja, at least—begins at 100.

And that fact goes a long way toward explaining the Bakker Ninja and excusing its shortcomings. Other motorcycles might feel at home at speed, but hardly a one of them thrives on it the way this motorcycle does. And almost none of them can provide the raw kinesthetics of a racebike that you can experience on the Bakker Ninja. In fact, you feel like a racer because the bike makes you *act* like one.

Indeed, the Bakker bike stands at the outer fringes of motorcycling, in much the same way that a chopper exists at the opposite end. As a result, the Dutch machine can afford to make few concessions to comfort or day-to-day utility, while putting plenty of demands on the rider. In short, the Bakker-frame Ninja can take you places production machinery doesn't dare to go. It takes the Ninja's sporting promise and refines it, triple-distilling it down to a sporting stance that's a mile-wide and a micron thick; turn it and it practically disappears. So take care when you look at the Nico Bakker Ninja. What you see depends on your point of view. —*Charles Everitt*

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

S100 Total Motorcycle Cleaner

Spray-on new.

• As CYCLE GUIDE's Editorial Assistant, I'm saddled with the distinctly unpleasant task of cleaning test bikes. And washing up after a multi-bike shootout is like cleaning up after a wine-tasting: *Someone's* been having fun, but it's certainly not me. Although I've sampled everything from household cleaners to trick water nozzles, most have been as satisfying as Thunderbird to Ernest and Julio.

These days, though, cleaning doesn't leave such a nasty aftertaste, thanks to S100, a German-made motorcycle cleaner. Designed to clean the entire exterior of a bike, S100 is water-based so as not to dull the finish, or harm sensitive parts such as rubber or brake components. Yet as mild as S100 is, it cleans oily, dirty engines and chain-lube-coated swingarms as well as the best solvent-based engine cleaners, and washes away bugs, too.

Even more impressive than its strength, S100 is easy to use. In fact, cleaning the grungiest streetbike is usually a two-step process: Just spray S100 on a cold, dry motorcycle and follow with a blast of water. After that, wipe down the paint and chrome—or simply ride the motorcycle briefly—and it looks as if you've spent hours meticulously waxing each piece.

Germany's answer to soap and elbow grease

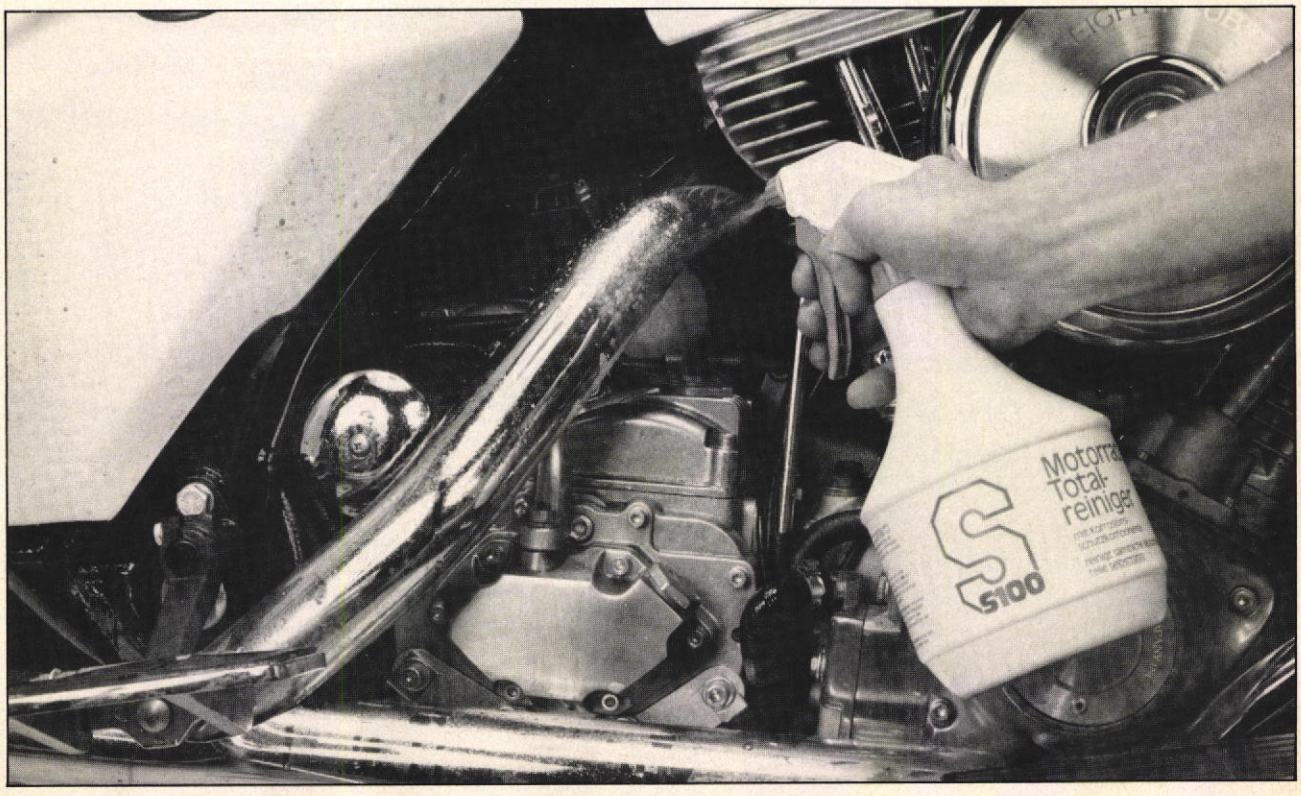
A new solution for a vintage problem.

Caked-on mud complicates matters only slightly; the manufacturer suggests rinsing the machine first to remove heavy grime, then spray on the cleaner. From there, S100 removes even the tenacious film that builds up between cylinder fins. When it comes to cleaning mud-encrusted motorcycles, S100 is the best I've used, and can make even the filthiest dirtbike or ATV look virtually showroom new.

Your bike can look that way, too, provided you're willing to put up with S100's main shortcoming: price. At $9.95 per liter—good for about three cleanings—it's the Château Lafite-Rothschild of motorcycle cleaners. As for myself, well, my boss will make sure I have a case in the cellar and a bottle breathing on the shelf, because he doesn't like a shop full of dirty motorcycles any more than I do.

—Mike Gillies

Distributor: Mustang Motorcycle Products, Town Hill Road, Terryville, Connecticut 06786-0283
Price: $9.95 per liter; $18.95 per 2 liter refill



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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Hannah Racing Products Flak Jak 2 Air System

Why is there air?

© 1986 VIC HUBER

• Off-road racing can be roughly akin to flying over enemy airspace, only the barrages consist of rocks, and when you bail there's no parachute to cushion the fall. And you can bet that few riders understand that better than Bob Hannah, who's spent his share of time in the free-fire zone of motocross, and who helped develop his own brand of upper-body armor, the HRP Flak Jak 2 Air System.

What gives the Flak Jak 2 Air System its name—and sets it apart from other shoulder pads—is a series of 19 foam-filled, sealed-vinyl air cells glued to the underside of the armor in the shoulder cups and around the collarbones and spine. Together with the vest's conventional foam padding and nylon netting, the cells help absorb the fury of your falls.

In other respects, though, the construction of the HRP vest is fairly typical. Like most chest protectors, the Flak Jak minimizes minor impacts by putting hard plastic and 1 to 2 inches of air space between your body and life's hard knocks. Furthermore, fabric-covered foam padding inside the arm guards, on the bottom corners of the front panel and along the bottom edge of the back panel prevent chafing, while nylon netting within the shoulder cups provides additional crush space. Elastic bands on the arm guards and adjustable elastic straps with Fastex buckles on either side of the vest keep the lightweight Flak Jak securely positioned, while ventilation slots help keep you cool in the heat of battle.

The venting works, too, even in 100 degree heat. In addition, the Flak Jak 2 is nearly as easy to put on as a T-shirt, and almost as comfortable, allowing full freedom of movement, no matter how crossed-up you get or how wild your riding style. Plus, a thick sponge-rubber molding around the neck opening prevents the armor's edges from contacting the rider's neck or chest.

In fact, about the only shortcoming to the HRP Flak Jak is its sky-high price. Still, the high-tech features and unobtrusive comfort make it a worthwhile addition to any off-road pilot's armory—especially when it's time to hit the silk. *—George Wegner*

HRP Flak Jak 2 Air System
Manufacturer: Hannah Racing Products Inc., Dept CG, Box 2109, Sun Valley, Idaho 83353
Suggested retail: $98.75
Available sizes: Medium, for riders 95 to 135 pounds; Large, for riders from 135 to 200 pounds
Available colors: red, white, blue, yellow and black, or any two- or three-color combination

Holidays on Ice

• New Englanders have always been rebellious. Indeed, ever since the Adams clan led the American Revolution, people in the northeast corner of the United States have been stubborn about their ways. And New England's motorcycle racers carry on that tradition of stubbornness, because despite subfreezing weather and bellybutton-high

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 PAUL BUCKLEY

Continued

snow drifts, they continue to race through the winter.

The racing, as you might guess, is on ice, and although the events don't necessarily measure up to the professional level of an AMA Grand National, they certainly are not without a distinct New England flavor. Most of the racers, you see, refuse to relinquish their trusty old bikes for new, state-of-the-art dirttrack hardware. Consequently, single-cylinder Ossas, Triumph Cubs, even old Honda CB125s make the grid at these club-level events.

Despite the rather low-key approach the ice racers enjoy, the top riders are out to win, and everybody has his own speed tricks. Several years ago, for instance, riders were adapting carbide studs from automobile snow tires to their motorcycle rubber for better grip on the slick ice. But the traction was *too* good, so now only sheet metal screws threaded into the tires' knobs are allowed, thus preserving the traditional dirttrack-style full-lock slide. As a stopgap measure to ensure that the screws won't wear a hole through the inner tube, the racers stuff a smaller tire within the studded carcass. Rudimentary, yet effective.

Yet while outdoor ice racing certainly won't blossom into a national sport (After all, where would they hold the Florida and Hawaiian qualifiers?), it has its time and place in New England. In effect, the ice racers have signed their own wintertime Declaration of Independence, keeping the spirit of racing alive, no matter how inclement the weather. *—Dain Gingerelli*

TRACK TEST:

Kawasaki KX125

A faster track to a full trophy shelf. BY DAVID DEWHURST

• In 1985, success in motocross racing's 125cc class largely depended on one thing: whether or not you rode a KX125. Riding anything other than the Green Machine almost automatically resigned you to a season spent looking for more horsepower and ducking KXs' roosts. Kawasaki riders, on the other hand, spent *their* time building bigger trophy shelves and figuring ways to make the KX's rear suspension work as well as the motor.

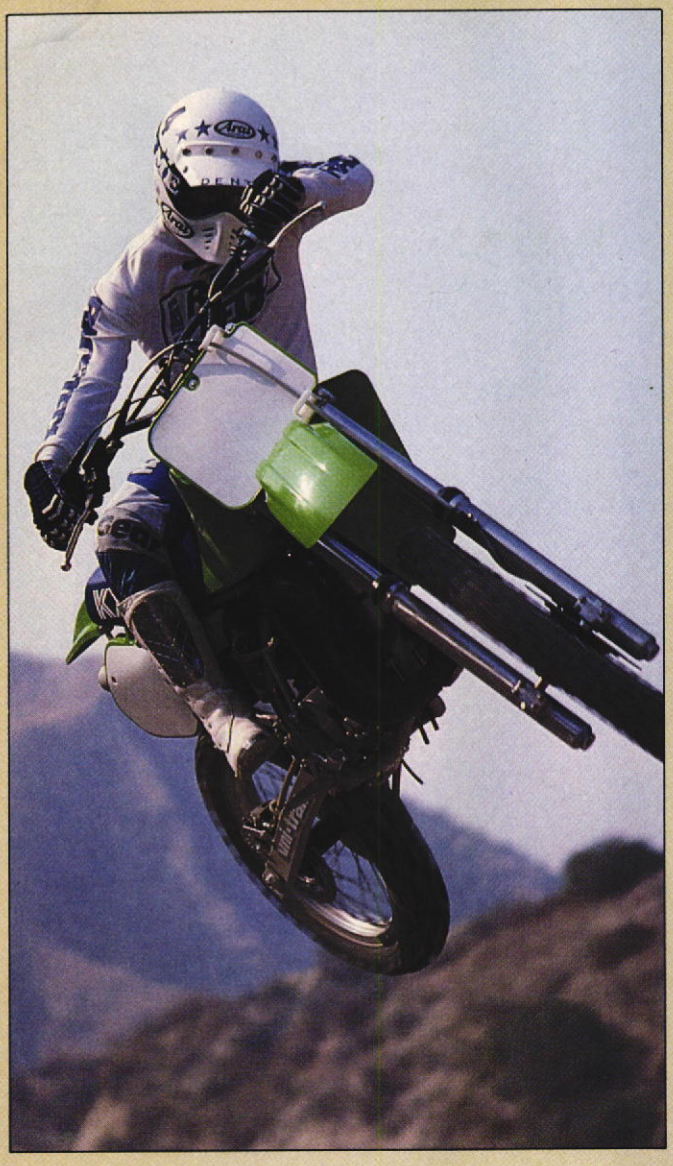
Well, Kawasaki engineers spent the season developing and refining the KX125's suspension, too, and they also went hunting for new ways to extract even more power from the already impressive 125. The result of their work is an all-new chassis and a stronger motor for 1986.

With such a high-powered start on the competition, Kawasaki's engineers didn't need to make drastic changes to the KX motor. Instead, they resorted to some minor tweaks and fine tuning. First, they turned to the mechanically operated Kawasaki Integrated Powervalve System (KIPS) and fitted a larger-diameter valve (up 3mm to 18mm) with larger sub-port passages into the exhaust port. Then, they increased the transfer port volume, but left all port timings unchanged.

On the intake side of the motor, the engineers fitted a new "keyhole" carburetor from Mikuni. As its name suggests, the carb's venturi is keyhole shaped, with the smaller lower part of the venturi opening at partial throttle, which increases gas flow at low speed to improve low-speed throttle response. The larger-venturi section is then uncovered at greater throttle openings to provide maximum flow for high rpm. Kawasaki also revised the ignition advance curve, retarding it 2 degrees from last year's figure of 13 degrees at 11,000 rpm.

Those changes add up to a significant boost to a powerband that already was rippling

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 DAVID DEWHURST



with muscle. Gone is the slight dip in the midrange of the '85 KX's power curve, replaced by a torquey surge that's rare among eighth-liter machines. In fact, the KX125 pulls hardest in the midrange, putting dirt and distance between its rear wheel and the competition. The KX revs high and hard, too, but power drops off on top; holding onto a gear too long or downshifting too early could let YZs, RMs and CRs motor past. Before the competition starts jumping for joy, though, they should know that the new KX isn't hampered by its powerband. On the contrary, the KX is faster than before, and its powerband is easier to use.

In fact, the KX itself is easier to ride this year, because for '86 the chassis measures up to the motor. As with the engine, the frame received some fine tuning, and many of its dimensions haven't changed from those of last year's KX. What *did* change, however, is the Uni-Trak rear suspension. Gone is the single vertical link that connected the swingarm to an underseat rocker arm and a vertically mounted shock, replaced by an updated Uni-Trak that resembles Honda's Pro Link system, with a more compact linkage below the swingarm.

In addition to being more compact, the new design provides other important advantages. For example, the '86 KX has a lower center of gravity because it no longer uses the old-style Uni-Trak's heavy, high-mounted bellcrank mechanism. Moreover, the shock now feeds its loads straight into the main frame, making a load-bearing rear frame section unnecessary, and allowing the use of a featherweight aluminum bolt-up subframe. As a result, the '86 KX's center of gravity is not only lower, but further forward, too, closer to the bike's center. The new, more compact suspension even benefits the engine, because the suspension takes up less room beneath the saddle, permitting the use of a larger, more efficient airbox that lets the motor breathe more freely and make more power.

You notice the effect of the chassis changes when you straddle the KX; the area below the seat feels narrower, and a lower saddle height lets you sit in, rather than on top of, the bike. And once the starting gate drops, it's clear the bike is vastly improved over the '85 version. That's especially true of the rear suspension, which absorbs everything from giant drop-offs to tiny stutters with a near-magical compliance once unique to Suzuki's Full Floater design. Still, the shock could use a wider range for both the high-speed and low-speed compression damping adjustments. The bike works best with both set full-soft, but that leaves riders who want a softer rear suspension out in the cold. The compression damping adjusters need to be relocated, too, because a rider's boot can hit them and change their settings.

Apart from those minor hitches, though, the KX's rear end does a superb job over a wide variety of terrain and for an unusually wide range of rider weights. The same is true of the revised front fork, which retains the '85 KX's 8-way adjustable compression damping and 3-way adjustable spring preload, and features a variable-damping valve for '86 that increases compression damping as the fork compresses. Yet despite the amount of possible adjustment, there's still a need for less spring preload than is available within the adjustment range.

But for most riders, the new KX125 is Cadillac plush. The fork smooths out even the roughest washboard sections, and the rest of the bike tracks with a stability unknown with previous KXs. The steering is quicker, too, and more precise than its predecessor. Even the new rear disc brake adds to the KX125's feeling of controllability and offers plenty of stopping power for even the craziest pro, with no grabbing or locking.

Heaping all those virtues onto what was an acclaimed class-leader is going to make life even tougher for the competition. They already had a considerable way to go just to *equal* the old KX, and beating the '86 version is going to take a quantum leap. Anything less will only ensure that they'll have to return to their porting tools and start reading up on suspension tuning. In the meantime, KX owners can start building yet *another* extension to their trophy shelf. ●

KAWASAKI KX125

Importer: Kawasaki Motors Corp.
2009 E. Edinger Ave.,
Santa Ana, California 92711

Category	motocross
Suggested retail price	$2049
Engine type	liquid-cooled two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement	one reed-valve controlled intake, four main transfers, two booster transfers, one main exhaust, two variable-height booster exhausts
Bore and stroke	56.0mm x 50.6mm
Displacement	124.6cc
Compression ratio (corrected)	9.4:1
Carburetion	one 35mm oval-venturi Mikuni slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter, 19-position adjustable compression-damping blowoff valve, 3-position adjustable spring preload/ 11.2 in. (284mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Kayaba, 4-position adjustable high-speed compression damping, 14-position adjustable low-speed compression damping, 20-position adjustable rebound damping, 20mm spring preload range/12.6 in. (320mm)
Weight	201 lbs. (91.2kg)
Wheelbase	57.4 to 58.4 in. (1459 to 1484mm)
Seat height	37.1 in. (942mm)
Steering head angle	27.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.57 in. (116mm)
Top speed (observed)	74 mph (119 kph)
Warranty	none
Available color	green only

RIDING IMPRESSION:

1986 Yamahas

Yamaha's magnificent seven.

BY CHARLES EVERITT

There's a new confidence at Yamaha these days. It's the confidence of a gunfighter who knows he's got the measure of his opponent, and just stepped out into the street with the sun at his back. It's a confidence bred from knowing they've got the competition *covered.*

Yamaha has good reason to feel that way, too, because the tuning-fork firm has the strongest lineup for '86 of *any* of the Japanese moto-manufacturers. In fact, for '86, Yamaha's drawn a bead on the competition, with seven well-placed rounds, and we had the opportunity to sample each of them at Yamaha's Fukuroi test track in Japan.

Still, the strength of the new-model line reflects more than just the rosy-red cheeks of corporate health and a fresh willingness to fight; it also shows some new thinking on the company's part. For instance, Yamaha—like other manufacturers—is deeply concerned with attracting new blood to motorcycling. And in Yamaha's view, most entry-level riders don't see themselves as sport riders, cruisers or tourers; instead, they need an alternative, a bike that offers up a broad slice of motorcycling. To that end, Yamaha offers the YX600 Radian.

To create the Radian, Yamaha took a mix-and-match approach, turning to the FJ600 for a powerplant, and making alterations to the carburetors (2mm smaller), intake cam timing and valve lift to boost midrange power. The company rubber-mounted that 599cc motor in a twin-shock frame from the defunct 550 Maxim, then added 16-inch wheels at both ends for light, quick steering.

And the result speaks volumes for Yamaha's approach, because the Radian offers performance that can charm the uninitiated and delight the experienced. For instance, a tyro will appreciate the way the motor revs smoothly and makes good low-end power. And almost every rider will be drawn to the way the power starts building seriously at 5000 rpm and kicks in hard at 6500, proof that Yamaha got the midrange it was looking for. Steering is light and quick—perhaps overly so for beginners. Still, the suspension helps the bike maintain its composure, even at racing speeds, though some riders will want more rebound damping for the shocks. Overall, the Radian is the surprise in Yamaha's line, and might do more than just entice new riders into the fold; it might lure them to the starting lines for production-class roadracing, too.

The FZX700S Fazer, on the other hand, could coax some sporting riders off their FZ750s. It's a full-blown sport-custom, with the emphasis on speed, high-tech appearance and sporting performance. For the first part of that description, Yamaha lifted the engine out of the FZ750, shortened the stroke 3.6mm for a tariff-dodging 697cc displacement. Further, reduced intake valve lift and an additional crossover pipe between the center two head pipes in the exhaust system boosts the Fazer's low-end and midrange horsepower. In addition, the retuned motor utilizes rubber mounts that prevent almost any vibration from reaching the rider. The chassis is constructed of rectangular steel tubing a la the FZ750, with dual deCarbon rear shocks, a 16-inch front wheel and a 15-inch rear. Finally, the whole package is wrapped up in styling heavily influenced by Yamaha's V-Max, with a flurry of chrome accents to show the "flow of power" through the engine.

And make no mistake; the Fazer's motor pumps out the horsepower, especially when the tach needle brushes past 7000 rpm. Then, the FZX accelerates with FZ-like fury, with the rush building all the way to the 11,000-rpm redline, which translates to an indicated 145 mph in sixth gear. That's heady performance for any motorcycle, let alone a 700. And on the racetrack, the Fazer feels quite at home, remarkably so for a sport-cruiser. The riding position created by the low, flat handlebar, low seat height and slightly forward pegs feels right and comfortable, and the bike can carve a precise line through corners. Throttle response is slightly abrupt, though, which makes fast, smooth riding difficult in tight turns, and, like the Radian, the bike could use more shock rebound damping. But those criticisms crop up only at racing speeds. Otherwise, the Fazer comports itself amazingly well in fast riding. It's a high-tech hot-rod in the V-Max tradition that should be more than able to hold its own on the backroads.

Yet where the Fazer flaunts its high-tech nature, the SRX600 glorifies tradition. With the SRX, Yamaha wanted to create a motorcycle that embodied the essence of the bygone big single, with all the inherent virtues, such as a torquey motor, light weight and the distinct feel that only a single has. Still, high performance had to be part of the program for the SRX, and as a result, Yamaha employed its proven

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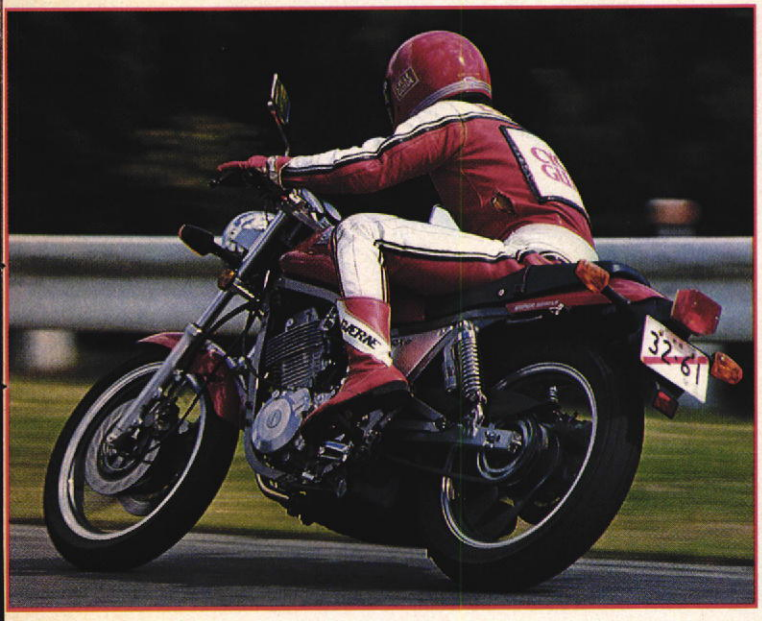


595cc SOHC four-valve motor from the XT600, and altered the intake and exhaust systems for more power throughout the rev range. For the chassis, Yamaha built a new frame from square-section steel tubing, with triple disc brakes, and 18-inch wheels front and rear.

And, based on our test ride at Fukuroi, we can say that Yamaha succeeded in its goal to recreate the big single, although perhaps in a couple of ways it hadn't intended. The SRX does feel light and narrow, true to the single's tradition, and flicks quickly through corners, making the bike a pleasure to ride at a relaxed, 8/10ths pace. Plus, the engine boasts a mile-wide powerband that's tractable, easy to use and relatively free of vibration at legal speeds. Unfortunately, though, Yamaha fitted far taller (lower numerically) final gearing compared to the XT, and, consequently, the SRX feels almost as slow as an old-style big

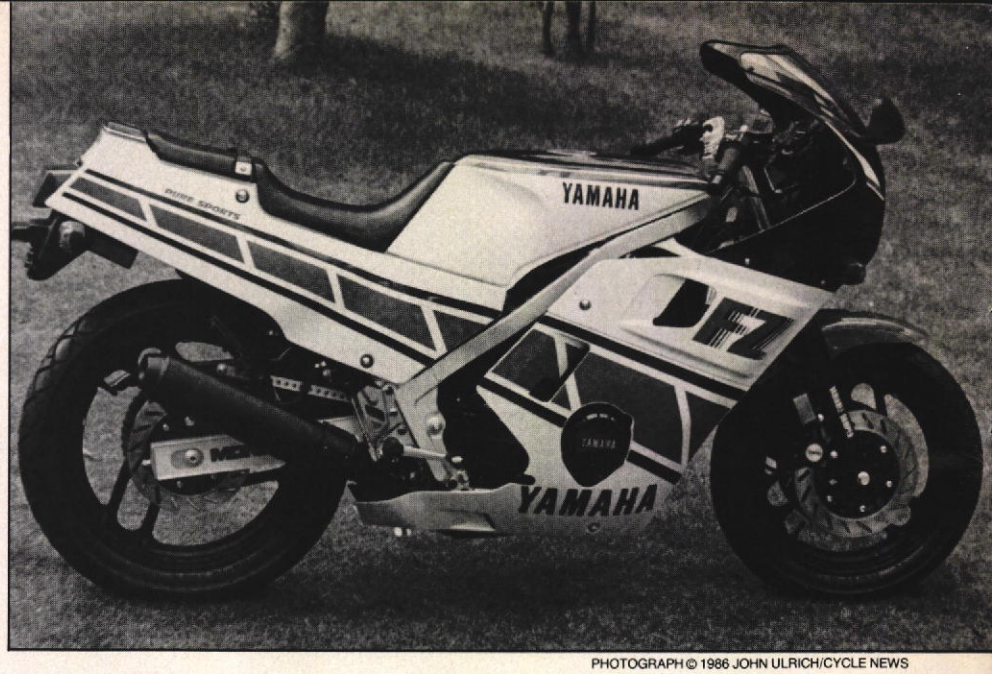
Continued

single. Moreover, at engine speeds beyond 5000 rpm, the vibration through the grips and pegs provides further reminders of big singles, ones that most riders would as soon forget. But for the most part, the SRX provides an engaging means to return to the past, yet still keep both feet firmly in the present.

At the other end of the performance spectrum lies the revitalized big-bore FJ, the FJ1200, just one of several old friends returning in Yamaha's lineup for '86. Big-bore takes on special meaning with the FJ, too, because for '86 the air-cooled, 16-valve, inline four gets 3mm-bigger bores, bringing capacity up to 1188cc and increasing low-end and midrange power in the bargain. In fact, the extra power can be felt throughout the rev range, making the breathtakingly fast FJ even faster, and allowing easy powerslides even out of Fukuroi's 100-mph sweeper. Accompanying the engine mods are a new, more slippery fairing, needle bearings in the Monocross rear suspension linkage, and a clock for the instrument panel, among other things. Otherwise, the big FJ feels completely familiar, with light, quick steering, and a level of comfort that makes it *the* pick among sport-tourers.

Yamaha's Venture Royale also shares a sport-touring bent, but added to that for '86 is an emphasis on better passenger accommodations and improved capability for straight-up American-style touring. Consequently, Yamaha added fixed saddlebags with removable liners, for a claimed 50 percent increase in luggage volume. Plus, for the passenger there's a three-way adjustable backrest and adjustable floorboards. Other changes include a revised cruise-control with tap-up/tap-down and resume features, electrically operated anti-dive units for the fork, and increased power due to 3mm-bigger bores, with a resultant displacement of 1294cc. The added power is especially satisfying; the big vee-four feels even stronger than before, providing surprising performance for a touring rig. The cruise-control works superbly, too, and seems easily the equal of that on Honda's Limited Edition Gold Wing. Those changes make for genuine improvements to the Venture, a machine that was already one of the best in its class.

Another class leader, the big Virago, is back for '86, and bigger, too. Yamaha increased the air-cooled vee-twin's stroke 5.8mm, transforming the Virago 1000 into the Virago 1100, and, to smooth out the engine's power pulses, increased the A.C. generator's mass 20 percent and altered the ignition timing. Consequently, the Vi-



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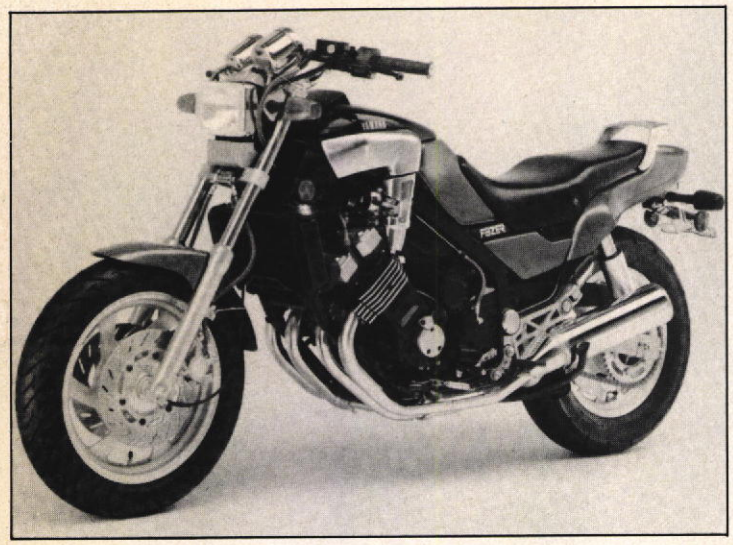

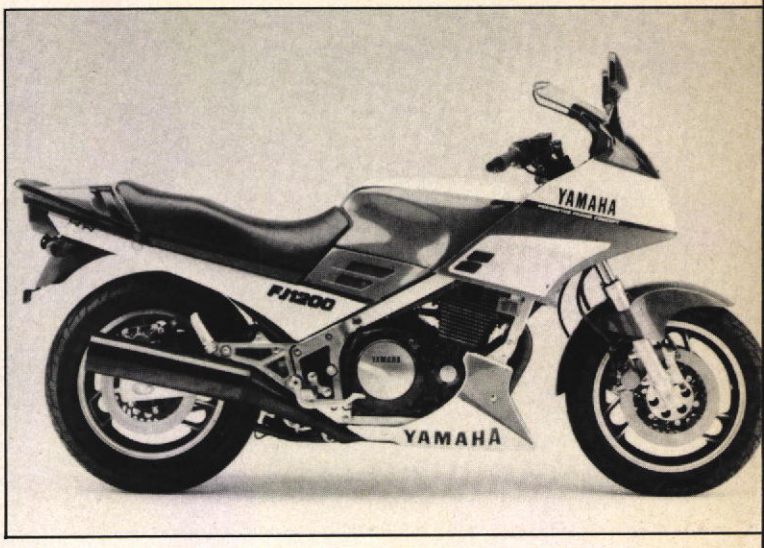

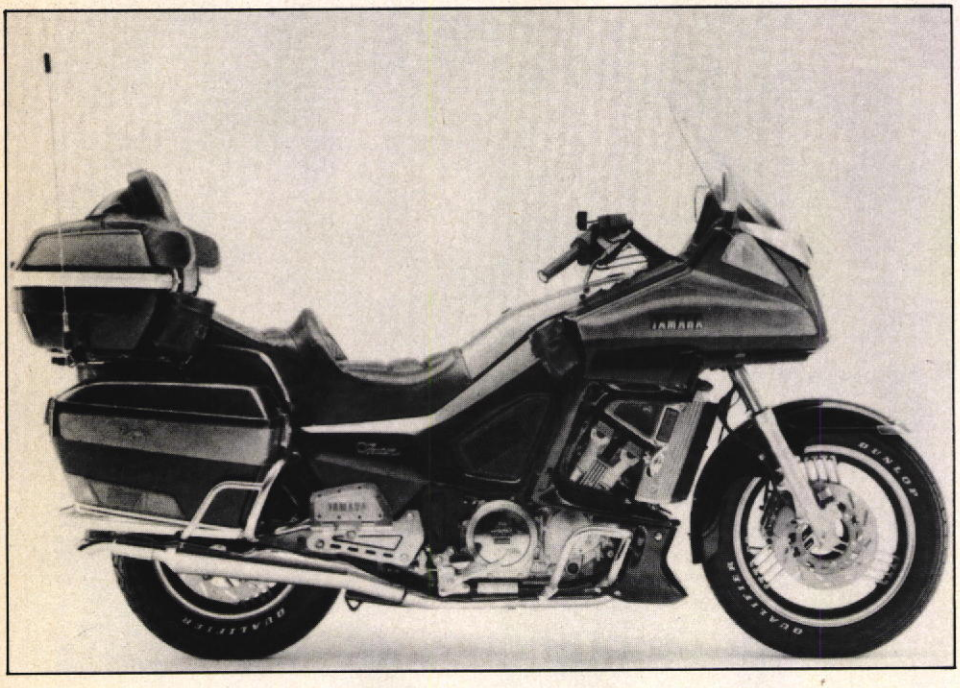

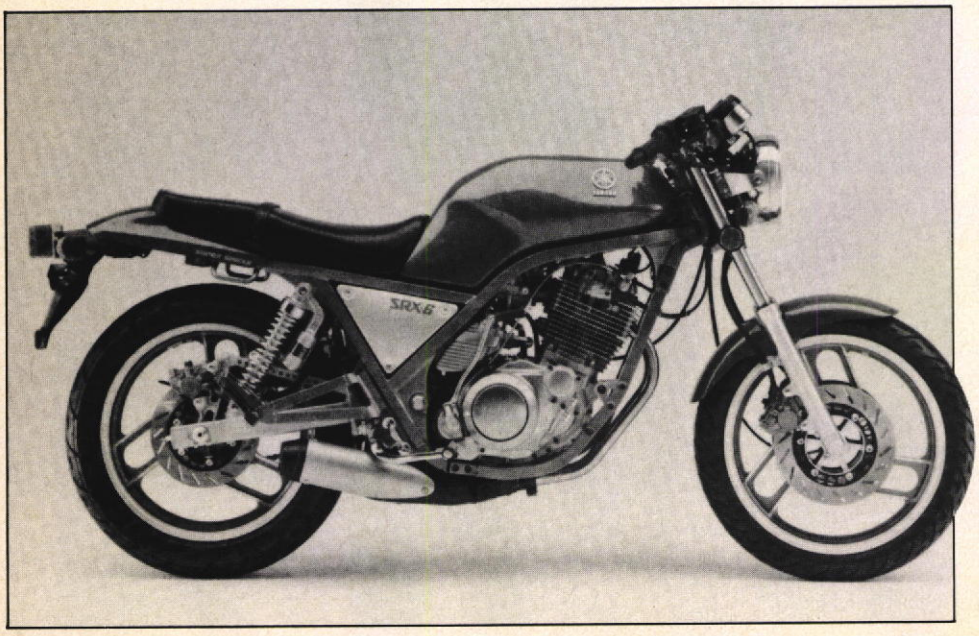

rago feels smoother and substantially stronger everywhere in the rev range. Accompanying the extra power is a revised styling treatment, with two-tone paint, more-rounded engine cases and more-tapered cylinder finning for a stronger custom look. American boulevardiers have voted for that look with their pocketbook; the Virago has been Yamaha's best seller for some time, and the 1100 version should only continue that trend.

Yamaha has one more surprise in store, this time for American sport riders: the FZ600, which replaces the FJ600. Yamaha didn't have a running version available, or complete specs, but we do know this much. The bike is basically a punched-out version of Yamaha's domestic-only FZ400; both the 400 and FJ600 engines have the same basic bottom end, so the conversion was a natural. Yamaha did some tuning work on the motor, though, to increase midrange power, altering the carbs, exhaust cam, airbox and exhaust system from FJ specs. Otherwise, the FZ600 is virtually identical to the 400, with a square-section steel-tube frame, triple slotted-disc brakes and single-shock Monocross rear suspension, all cloaked in a racy full fairing. From all appearances, then, the FZ600 might well become the top gun in the middleweight class, both on and off the racetrack.

In fact, Yamaha seems to have the drop on *everyone* this year, with a model lineup that covers almost every segment of motorcycling, from entry-level hardware to full-on sport machines, bikes for American and Euro-style touring, cruisers, and even a big single for nostalgia buffs. Mind you, we'll have to wait for complete road tests to get the measure of each bike, but from where we sit, it looks like Yamaha's got the sun at its back, and the other guys just blinked. •

SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Racecourses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI

1985 Winners & Losers

A last look at last year.

• To the casual observer, 1985 might not seem like a landmark year in racing. For instance, Honda did what was expected, and steamrolled to a second-in-a-row AMA Grand National Championship. The results of the Motocross des Nations were equally predictable, too, with the American trio of Ron Lechien, Jeff Ward and David Bailey continuing a command performance by U.S. motocross stars that premiered five years ago.

But there was far more to racing in 1985 than predictable victories. In world championship competition, Freddie Spencer trounced everyone, winning both the 250cc and 500cc classes in GP roadracing. And in American roadracing, Daytona Speedway shook the AMA roadrace establishment by featuring *Superbike* racing as its main event, relegating the Camel Pro Series point-paying Formula 1 race to support status during Cycle Week. But while Super-

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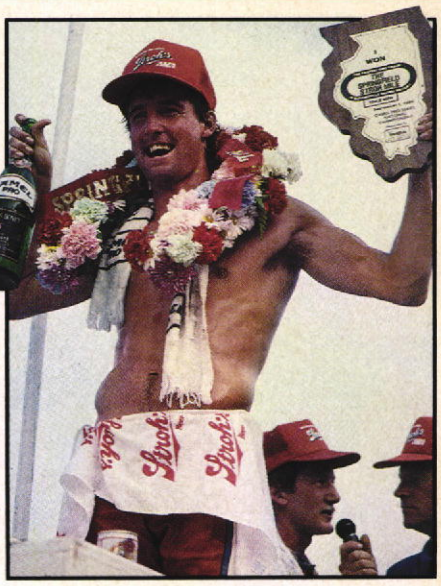

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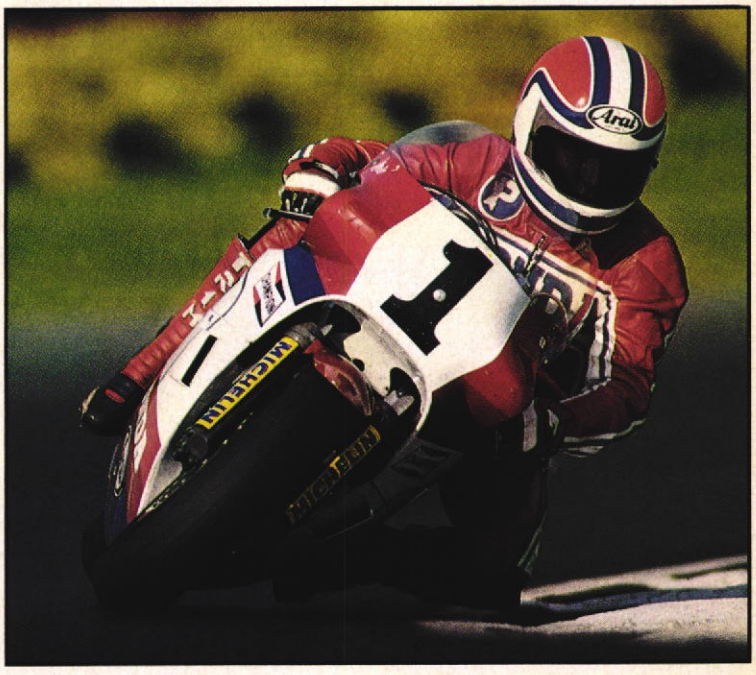
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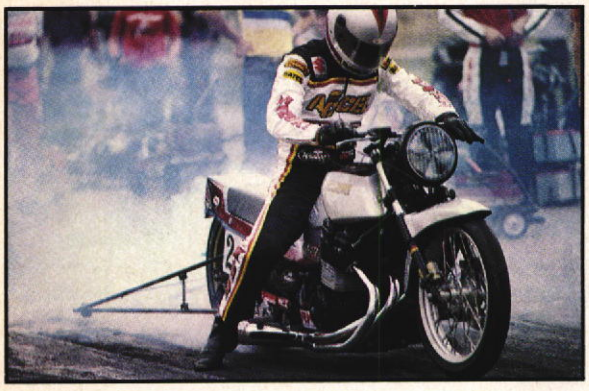

PJ1
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The greening of America

Ward won the 250 and Supercross titles.

Glover showed true grit on a YZ490

Busting the works brigade.

Schlachter's RS500 passes Filice's FZ750

F1 took the outside line on Superbike.

Parker and Shobert after a CPS Mile

Riding a Mile for a Stroh's beer.

bike proponents predicted Formula 1 eventually would die on the vine, grids blossomed with privateer Honda RS500s, Yamaha TZ750s and 500s, not to mention the Cagiva 500 square-four ridden by Jimmy Adamo. Ultimately, Formula 1 reached its zenith last year at Laguna Seca when Randy Mamola and three-time world champion Kenny Roberts wheelied their factory four-cylinder racers to first and second place respectively. The Mamola-Roberts show heightened awareness of the F1 class, and made Superbike supporters wonder if the fans really *do* prefer watching streetbikes, rather than exotic Grand Prix machinery, on the racetrack.

On the flattrack front, Harley-Davidson appeared down and out before the Camel Pro Series even began. But by midsummer, Scott Parker put his semifactory-backed XR750 ahead of the Hondas at the Indianapolis Mile, giving a preview of what Jay Springsteen would do a few weeks later at Syracuse. Indeed, Harley tuners found new power in those old engines, and rumors of a carburetor restrictor rule for the Hondas subsided. By the end of the Camel Pro Series, neither Honda nor Harley had an edge in Class C flattracking, making 1985 perhaps one of the best in Camel Pro history.

But now that the checkered flag has been waved for the final time, putting the 1985 racing season into the history books, it's time to reflect on the year's results. So, while the lingering two-stroke smoke settles and the winter rains wash the tracks clean of oil and rubber, it's time to declare CYCLE GUIDE's annual Winners & Losers. May there be no hard feelings, and let the best racers win—or lose.

Field Fillers of 1985

• Winner: Christian Sarron. Having navigated his way to first place in the rain-soaked German Grand Prix at Hockenheim last May, Frenchman Christian Sarron ended an American winning streak that started in 1982.

• Loser: Yamaha. Despite Eddie Lawson's heroic efforts to beat Honda-mounted Freddie Spencer, Yamaha finished number two in the 500cc world championship.

• Winner: Freddie Spencer. When Freddie Spencer declared that he was going to contest the 250cc *and* the 500cc world championships, people said he was crazy. After he won both classes—the first time that's ever been done in a single season—those same skeptics realized that the new double-world champion was an extraordinary rider—and person.

• Loser: Almost every rider in the 250cc and 500cc Grand Prix. After the South African GP, nobody could catch Fast Freddie last year.

• Winner: Kenny Roberts. Having sat out the past two GP seasons, King Kenny showed up for Laguna Seca on a works Yamaha YZR500. He didn't win the race, but Roberts proved he was still one of the fast guys by setting a new track record during qualifying. Later in the year, KR went to Italy, where he tested the Cagiva 500 vee-four GP bike, in the process coming within 0.01-second of the lap record.

• Loser: Kenny Roberts. For the first year in Roberts' professional career, he failed to win a race. He competed three times last year, and his results were: a second overall at Laguna Seca due to a faulty transmission; DNF at the Suzuka Eight Hour Endurance Race, after establishing a commanding lead before the seventh hour; and failure to transfer to the Main at the Springfield Mile on Sept. 1.

• Winner: Formula 1. When the 1985 AMA season began, the Formula 1 class appeared doomed to extinction. Yet, despite efforts by the AMA and Daytona Speedway to suppress the class in favor of Superbike racing, the Formula 1 entry list grew as the 1985 racing season unfolded.

• Loser: Superbike. Daytona Speedway's decision to elevate the Superbike race to the track's main event last March prompted class supporters to predict that streetbike racing would flourish worldwide. It hasn't—yet.

• Winner: Dan Kinsey. After surviving a 260-mph tumble at Bonneville aboard Dennis Manning's streamliner, "Tenacious," Kinsey promptly asked his crew, "How soon can it be repaired?"

• Loser: Dennis Manning. The man says he has the motorcycle that can break Don Vesco's 318-mph land speed record, but bad fortune and bad weather have, so far, proved him wrong. Maybe next year . . .

• Winner: Kawasaki, Honda and Yamaha. In AMA motocross, only Suzuki failed to win a championship. Broc Glover helped Yamaha prove that modified-production motocross bikes can be competitive, by winning the Open Class. Kawasaki's Jeff Ward won his second championship in a row (this time in the 250cc class), while Honda, through Ron Lechien's efforts, wrapped up the 125cc class.

• Loser: Suzuki and Yamaha. Suzuki was shut out entirely in motocross racing last year, while Yamaha—and Broc Glover—are green with envy at Kawasaki and Jeff Ward for winning the Supercross title.

• Winner: Cagiva. Finnish rider Pekka Vehkonen won the motocross 125cc world championship riding a Cagiva WMX125. It was the first world title for the Italian motorcycle company.

• Loser: Andre Malherbe. If there is to be a successor to Roger DeCoster in motocross racing, it will surely be Andre Malherbe. But not this year. Englishman David Thorpe won his first 500cc motocross world championship after a season-long struggle with Malherbe.

• Winner: R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. Motorcycle racing's favorite tobacco company, in the guise of Camel cigarettes, celebrated its 10-year anniversary with the AMA, as $175,000 filtered its way into the riders' point fund. And there appears to be even more Camel smoke on the AMA's horizon for 1986.

• Loser: Supercross. Considered motorcycling's Cinderella sport three years ago, the importance of Supercross waned drastically the past two seasons, thanks primarily to promoters' inflated egos, which interfered with promoting the racing.

• Winner: Gary Scott. The former Grand National Champion, and "America's privateer

rider," retired from racing last year. As his brother, Hank Scott, said about Gary's retirement, "16 years (of racing) is a long time."

• Loser: Ron Lechien. Racers all make mistakes on the track. But in the case of 1985 125cc National Motocross Champion Ron Lechien, his biggest mistake happened off the track, when customs officials caught him at the New Tokyo International Airport on Oct. 11. According to sources, a small amount of marijuana was found in Lechien's luggage; Honda officials were summoned, and it was decided to send the 18-year-old rider home the next day. Two weeks later, American Honda released Lechien from his contract, which was to expire at the end of the year.

• Winner: Stroh's Beer. The midwest brewery picked up the tab for 10 of the 11 Mile races last year, and got more than just television coverage on the USA Network and ABC-TV for its efforts; every Mile race went down to the wire, making the Stroh's Mile events the best racing series of 1985.

• Loser: ABC-TV. There should have been more Miles televised.

• Winner: Bubba Shobert. After his 1984 homestretch drive, Shobert was a shoo-in for the 1985 title. Yeah, Bubba!

• Loser: Ricky Graham. When Graham is healthy, he's No. 1 material to win The Plate. But a fractured femur sidelined him last year long enough to keep him out of the CPS points-chase with teammate Shobert. Graham learned a lesson from Kenny Roberts about quick healing last year, too: Drink plenty of carrot juice. We'll drink to that. Here's to your health, and a possible third AMA No. 1 Plate, Ricky.

• Winner: Dan Chivington, Alan Labrosse, Randy Renfrow, Miles Baldwin, Mike Baldwin, Ron Haslam, Wayne Rainey, Rich Schlachter and Doug Chandler; just a few of the privateers who made it into victory circle at 1985 Formula 1 events.

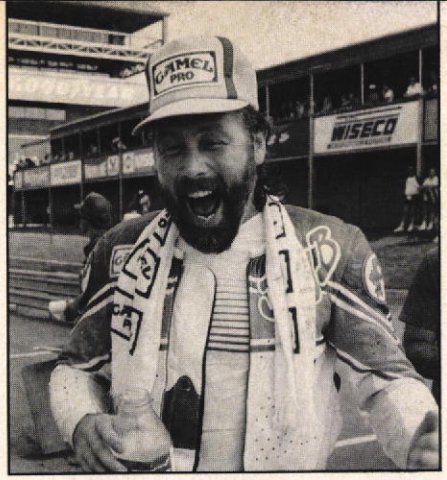
• Loser: Buell RW750. The most recent addition to Formula 1 racing, it hasn't made it to victory circle yet.

• Winner: Vance & Hines. Dragracing's dynamic duo, Terry Vance and Byron Hines, set two IDBA Pro Stock records last season. Vance turned out the lights in 8.28 seconds early in the season, then managed to hit the switch 0.02-seconds quicker at the Atco Nationals Sept. 22.

• Loser: Pizza John Mafaro. Terry Vance borrowed Pizza John's Suzuki GS1100—a bike originally built and raced by Vance & Hines—to set the Pro Stock record of 8.26 seconds. In the process, Vance also won the IDBA Pro Stock Championship.

• Winner: John Bettencourt. Bettencourt took home all the marbles at last year's Mid-Ohio Superbike winner. Prior to that, it was seven years ago that he won his last AMA Superbike race, at the Loudon National. Seven must surely be his lucky number.

• Loser: Pocono Raceway. Due in part to its out-of-the-way location in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, Pocono Raceway seldom attracts large crowds to its AMA National roadraces, and last year's race was no different. Too bad, because the 1985 race, in which Mike Baldwin nipped Randy Renfrow at the line, and only after dicing with Rich Schlachter and Miles Baldwin, was one of the best AMA roadraces last season. •



Middle-aged John Bettencourt

Surviving his Mid-Ohio crisis.

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Sito Pons and Franco Uncini double up

Tag-team tactics against Fast Freddie.

Ted Boody had a successful season

When Sears said charge, he did.

The best F1 race was at Pocono

But only a handful of fans saw it.

Talk Of The Town

• You scratch my back: Honda thought it was doing Randy Mamola a favor by lending him a four-cylinder NSR500 for the Laguna Seca National last July. But because Mamola considers Laguna Seca his home track, he'd already decided several weeks before that he was going to ride his slower NS500 triple there anyway. As he told the story following his win on the NSR, "Honda called me last week and asked if I wanted to ride the four-cylinder here. They didn't know that I had already agreed with Lee Moselle (Laguna's race promoter) to ride my three-cylinder."

• Daytona understatement: Last March, after winning Daytona's three Main events—Formula 1, 2 and Superbike—Freddie Spencer said about his near-uncontested hat trick, "You have to go out there and race against whoever is there, and do your best." He added, "Winning is winning."

• Second is winning: Siegfried Minich, who finished second to Spencer in the F2 race, said, "As far as I'm concerned, we won the race. You can't beat a million-dollar effort like the Honda/Spencer deal. We're a bunch of poor Austrians who are financed by family and friends, and Spencer is the best in the world with the best equipment in the world. There's nothing money can't beat."

• Third isn't winning: Englishman Andy Watts finished third to Spencer and Minich, and told it like it was. "Beat Spencer? Only Spencer's bike can beat Spencer, and it looked like it ran beautifully."

• Mike the Bike: Nobby Clark, considered one of the best Grand Prix roadrace mechanics on the circuit, was asked who he thought was the best roadracer ever. Clark, having tuned for such legends as Mike Hailwood, Rod Gould, Giacomo Agostini and Kenny Roberts, didn't hesitate to reply, "Hailwood. There will never be another Hailwood. He could ride any bike fast."

• Pingpong Baldwin: Defending AMA Formula 1 champion Mike Baldwin had a hectic season. He started the year in Europe, where he enjoyed little success in the first five Grand Prix rounds, so he returned to America, where he won a pair of AMA National roadraces. By season's end, he and mechanic Bruce Mass had bounced back and forth between Europe and America like pingpong balls, but their volleys eventually paid off, netting Baldwin a fifth AMA F1 title. When it was all over he said, "People were asking me where I'd be racing next weekend, and I really couldn't say. Jumping back and forth (across the Atlantic Ocean) was the toughest thing about last season."

• Sears sale: Finishing second in the Camel Pro Series is nothing to be ashamed of, and 1985 runner-up Ted Boody credits some of his success to his sponsor, Doug Sears. Sears, who owns College Bike Shop in Lansing, Michigan, might not have a bank account equal to the Honda factory team's, but he's willing to spend money when it's

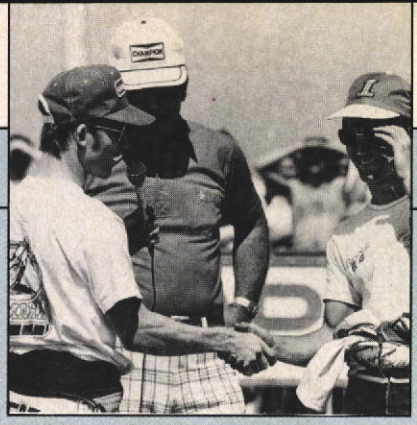
Continued

Pit Bits

• Light My Lucky: Kenny Roberts struck gold last autumn, when he formed his own Grand Prix roadrace team and signed Lucky Strike Cigarettes as his sponsor. According to Roberts, his No. 1 rider will be Randy Mamola, with a second bike available for another rider. Australian Wayne Gardner is KR's first choice for the second bike, but Gardner might re-sign with Honda's Rothman's team. Whatever the case, Roberts' team will run Yamaha YZR500s, in an arrangement similar to that of the Marlboro and French Sonauto Gauloises teams.

• Fast Relief: Of course, nobody has discounted Roberts from assuming an active role as a rider for his own team. He still has the talent, and could easily win a GP this year—if he wants to. But Roberts has stated that he will not ride, leading Mamola to joke, "I'm *glad* he's not riding—he's still fast."

• Great Scotts: You can squelch rumors about both Scott brothers—Hank and Gary—retiring. Although Gary has decided to hang up his steel shoe, Hank will go one more season. But the entire Camel Pro Series is not on his agenda, just select



Roberts and Gary Scott, circa 1975

Adversaries—and Champions.

Miles, and judging by his Mile record (he's won 12), he should reach the victory rostrum again before 1986 is through.

• Tire Wars: It appears that Carlisle won't be the only tire manufacturer involved in flattrack racing this year. Several people from the Continental Tire Co. were poking around the pits at the Sacramento Mile last September. And while the Continental corps was maintaining a low profile, rumors floated through the pits that Dunlop and possibly even Michelin have dirttrack tires they want to put on XR750s and RS750s this year, too.

• What it takes: Shortly after Alex Jorgensen finished third at the Sacramento Mile, Sept. 21, somebody pointed to Jorgenson's bald rear tire and whistled in amazement. Mert Lawwill, who tuned for second-place finisher Wayne Rainey, was standing nearby and commented about the greater amount of tread left on Rainey's tire, "That's why he finished second." Of course, race-winner Scott Parker had more tread than either Rainey or Jorgy.

• Suzuki Superbike: Although Suzuki, through the efforts of Yoshimura, will contest the AMA Superbike series, don't expect to see a new two-stroke 500 from the former manufacturer's world champion this year. Rumors pointed to a new vee-four, but sources close to Suzuki say the engine has been put on the back burner, so that development can go full speed ahead on the four-stroke GSX-R750 racer. The only GP engine, at least for the initial part of 1986, appears to be an update of the square-four that has been around since the mid-1970s.

• Quote Department: By the end of this Grand Prix season, Randy Mamola will have competed on Suzuki, Honda *and* Yamaha GP bikes. He said about his hat trick with the three marques, "I figure after I retire I can write a book about which (racebike) is the best."

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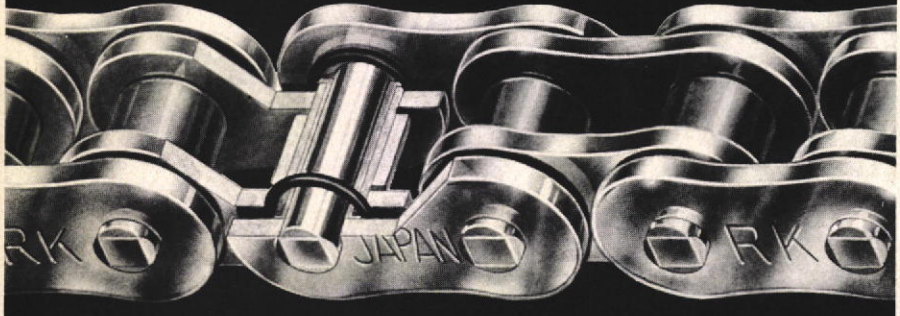

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necessary, even for a $20,000 racebike. So when Boody mentioned that Mike Baldwin's No. 2 RS500 roadracer was up for sale last summer, Sears replied without hesitation, "Buy it."

• Daytona dilemma: Because Daytona is traditionally the first roadrace of the AMA season, manufacturers sometimes face problems homologating their bikes before the March race. "Daytona is always a problem," Wayne Moulton, the AMA's competition director, said shortly after 1985's race. "Most (new) models haven't even begun tumbling off the assembly lines and into the water for shipment to the United States."

• More on Moulton: Concerning the rising costs of roadracing, Moulton said the Superbike class could one day escalate out of hand. "We must keep (out) the exotic metals, and (keep) weight down to keep the competition close and the costs down for the privateers," he said. Good luck.

• Yankee go home: The rumor that Kenny Roberts will come out of retirement and compete in the 1986 Grand Prix season grew after his spectacular ride at Laguna Seca last July. Finally, the question was put to him: Will he contest the world championship in 1986? The King replied simply, "The FIM would be pleased never to see me back."

• Roberts on Harley: Kenny Roberts' return to dirttrack racing came to a somewhat ignominious end when his Mert Lawwill-tuned XR750 lost its ignition during the heat race at the Springfield Mile. Despite

running as high as fourth, Roberts was unimpressed with his first ride on the venerable Harley Miler. "That thing's got so much internal friction, when the ignition went on the back straight, I thought the motor had seized," he noted later.

• Child Carr Center: When Chris Carr, 1985 AMA Rookie-Of-The-Year, was 5 years old, he knew then that he wanted to race motorcycles. "I'd sit on my father's racebikes," he said, "and go 'Zoom, zoom.' They (his parents) told me then that I could race when I was 6."

• Off-the-wall comment: After tying Mike Hailwood's record of winning three races during a single Isle of Man TT week, Joey Dunlop reflected on what it's like to ride the 37.73-mile road course. "You have to line up right for the jumps," he said. "If you don't, you can come down aimed at a wall."

• Life's a drag: Pro Stock dragracer Bob Carpenter knows what life is all about, and according to him, it's one big dragrace. "Everybody has the urge to dragrace," he said. "Even when a guy pulls up to a light in his economy car, half the time he's thinking how he can beat the other guy away from the light."

• Petered out: When Doug Chandler elected to contest both the dirttrack *and* roadrace portions of the Camel Pro Series, some people felt he'd bitten off more than he and his tuner Jerry Griffith could chew. Finally, Sparky Edmonston, a Honda factory mechanic, said last April, "Watch, this summer

Chandler and Griffith jaw about the RS500

Biting off more than they can chew.

their equipment will start breaking. Their program is just too much for a privateer effort." For the record, Chandler held the CPS points lead at midseason, 141 to 131 over Bubba Shobert. Then, Edmonston's prophecy came true, and Chandler never paid a visit to victory circle in the last 11 races, finally finishing fourth in the CPS.

• The pits for Yanks in Europe: Although American riders have demonstrated what might be called a thorough understanding of European roadrace courses, they can be excused for making a wrong turn into the pits. For example, at the Italian GP in Mugello, a notice was posted the first day of practice, and it read in English: "To all pilots. After the arrival line, it is forbidden to invert the way. It is so compulsory to make a slower lap and to enter regularly the box." •

SPEEDWAY:

World Team Cup Final

Denmark drops the big one on the U.S. team.

Captain Gundersen and his team

The Great Danes of speedway.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 SCOTT DIALOSIO

USA's Shawn Moran pressured Knudsen

But the Dane's GM answered the call.

• As the four riders in Heat One slid their nitro-burning motorcycles into Turn One, the sell-out crowd at Long Beach Stadium realized that this World Team Cup Final was going to be a world championship race unlike any other. The United States' Lance King, who started from the pole position, was pressured to the inside of the corner by England's Phil Collins. King, third-place finisher in the World Final last year, wouldn't budge, though, and held his line into Turn One. Still, Collins leaned on him until something had to give. And that something was Collins, who veered to the outside, and into the path of Denmark's Bo Petersen.

Petersen's bike low-sided into the catch fence, soon followed by Petersen himself. The race was red-flagged, and, according to FIM rules, the Danish rider was disqualified for the restart, which subsequently saw Collins break the starting tape, earning him a quick trip back to the pits, too. In the end, only King and Sweden's Tommy Nilsson started—and finished. It was going to be a wild World Team Cup Final.

The reason for the intense competition is that the WTC is one of the most coveted prizes in speedway racing, surpassed only by the World Final. Competitors are selected by way of a complex system, resulting in three national teams that face the host country, in this case the United States; the team earning the most points during the 16-heat one-night program is champion. Moreover, when the racing starts, it's almost as if a world war had broken out, because nationalism plays a key role in any WTC Final, and this year's race was no different. Afterwards, Harry Oxley, race promoter and America's speedway czar, said, "Have you ever seen such nationalism at a race? We were fortunate to have the Danes (fans) here, too. They waved their flags, and shouted and cheered their riders as if they were at a soccer match." Oxley fueled the fire in his own way, too, handing out miniature American flags to the partisan spectators as they passed through the turnstiles.

And through the frenzy and flag-waving, the Yanks took an early 3-to-0 lead over the favored Danes, making it look like the war was over before it had even started. Then Denmark's Tommy Knudsen, runner-up to countryman Erik Gundersen at last year's World Final, charged off the pole position in the second heat, and opened fire on the United States' John Cook. Cook, who was undefeated on the Long Beach track during the American Final only two months before, was an easy target, and finished a dismal third. In the process, Knudsen lowered the four-lap track record by two seconds. The Danes hadn't surrendered yet.

Indeed, the Swedish and English team riders dodged the cross fire from the Americans and Danes all night long, as they lowered the track record 13 times. In Heat 14, though, Knudsen pushed the final button on the Americans, defeating U.S. team captain Bobby Schwartz by several bike lengths to take a commanding four-point lead. To his credit, Schwartz rode flawlessly all night, and even managed to hold off Gundersen during Heat Four in what amounted to the most thrilling race of the evening.

However, the night—and the championship—belonged to the Danes, as they won by two points over the U.S. team. The Danish team's bikes did seem to have a speed advantage, though, and Knudsen's G.M. in particular was clearly the fastest along the straights. Just the same, none of the Americans made excuses. Even Schwartz confided when it was all over, "Hey, they're (Denmark) world champions. What can I say?"

Later, after the victory ceremony, one of Schwartz's friends congratulated him on a fine race, and tried to soften the defeat by saying "Almost." Schwartz just gave his typically Southern California smile and agreed. Then he added, "But almost doesn't count—only in horseshoes." And hand grenades. —*Dain Gingerelli*

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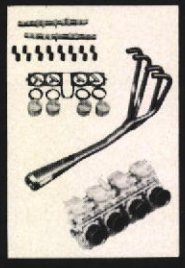

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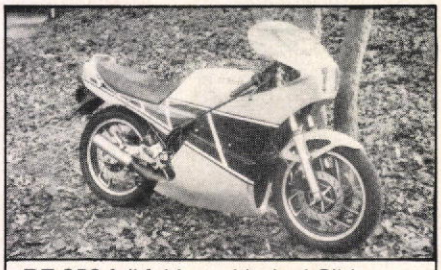

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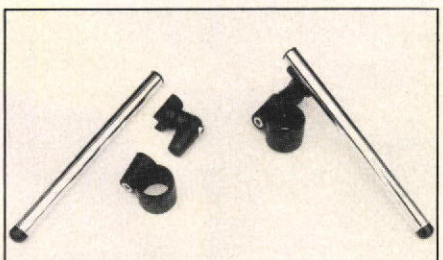

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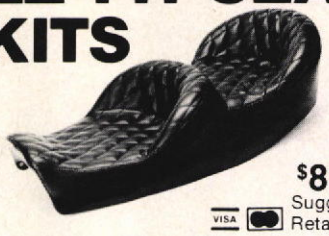

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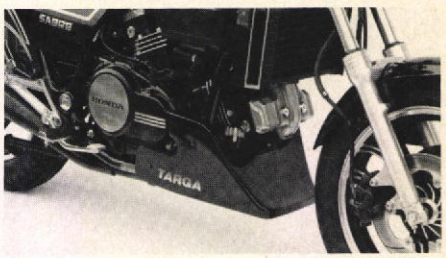

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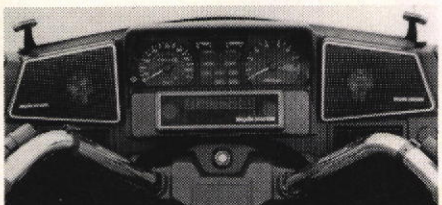

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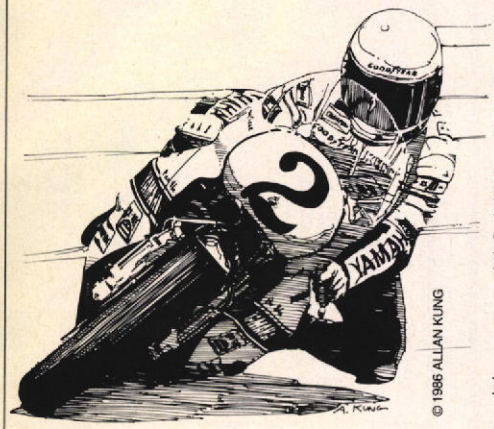
LETTERS

Cheers for two-strokes, manning the V-Max, and the eyes have it.



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GIMME A GAMMA

You had me hanging on every word in your comparison test of the RG, NS and RZV in the October 1985 issue.

I was a bit disappointed, though. As a Yamaha pilot and avid Eddie Lawson/Kenny Roberts fan, I was cheering for the RZV before I even started reading the article. But after careful consideration I suppose I could settle for the Gamma. What? The Suzuki isn't legal in the States? Geez, the EPA sure knows how to hurt a guy.

Scott Larson
Grand Forks, North Dakota

CALL ME IRRESISTIBLE

I really enjoyed the shootout of the two-strokes in your October issue. It made me want to trade in my 1984 GS550E Suzuki for an RG500 Gamma. I had to resist, or I wouldn't have a wife and kid when I got back from the Suzuki shop.

David A. Vahain
Abbotsford, British Columbia
Canada

THE PRICE OF POWER

In reference to the Honda NS400R in the September and October issues: I wish to know how I might purchase this fine motorcycle, and how much it would cost.

Berny Cromer
Nolanville, Texas

About $2620, plus taxes, license, title, smuggling charges, bond, attorney's fees, etc.—ed.

LIMITED MACHO

I'm compelled to comment on Paul Golde's letter about the V-Max (October 1985), since my husband bought one of the first V-Maxes sold in Georgia.

No, Mr. Golde, he needs nothing to "stroke his ego," nor does he waste precious time doing inane things such as "looking in streetside windows." He's a serious rider who dearly loves his V-Max, the only bike he's ever bought new and *not* felt compelled to modify.

It's no wonder there aren't many V-Maxes on the road. There's obviously a limited number of men—no offense, ladies—who are really "man enough" to handle a V-Max.

Shirley Sprayberry
Jonesboro, Georgia

POISON PENS

V.M. Latten's letter (December 1985) dumps on millions of Harley riders and is a gleaming example of a childlike, backward, stereotyped behavior I hate to see in motorcycling.

Letter writers in other motorsport magazines don't get so bent on a brand that they degrade the owner of another brand. If a letter insults the machine itself, that's one story. By the looks of things, people who insult Harleys are running out of wind. H-Ds are well finished and reliable with a look of the old and the manners of the new. No matter what other bikes I own, there will always be a Harley in my garage. Insulting letters will never change my freedom of choice.

Dwayne Albright
Ruby, New York

FOX HUNTING

I was disappointed in your article, "Radar Detector Shootout" (December 1985). There was no mention of Fox radar detectors. I read a product evaluation in your magazine about the Fox, and I bought one. I'm interested in knowing how it compares with radar detectors for motorcycles on the market. Maybe you left it out because the Fox *doesn't* compare.

G. W. Nichols
Kansas City, Kansas

We contacted the company—and several other manufacturers—but Fox wasn't interested—ed.

PASSPORT DETECTION

After reading Jerry Smith's "Radar Detector Shootout," I couldn't believe the Passport wasn't included.

I've owned two of them, and in my opinion, the Passport is the state-of-the-art radar detector. I would never leave home without it. It has easily saved me from being "bacon" every time I hit the Interstates. It's already saved me six to eight times its cost in violations, not to mention in increased insurance rates. If Smith had tested the Passport, I would have felt the article was complete and comprehensive.

Harry Law-Hing
Portland, Oregon

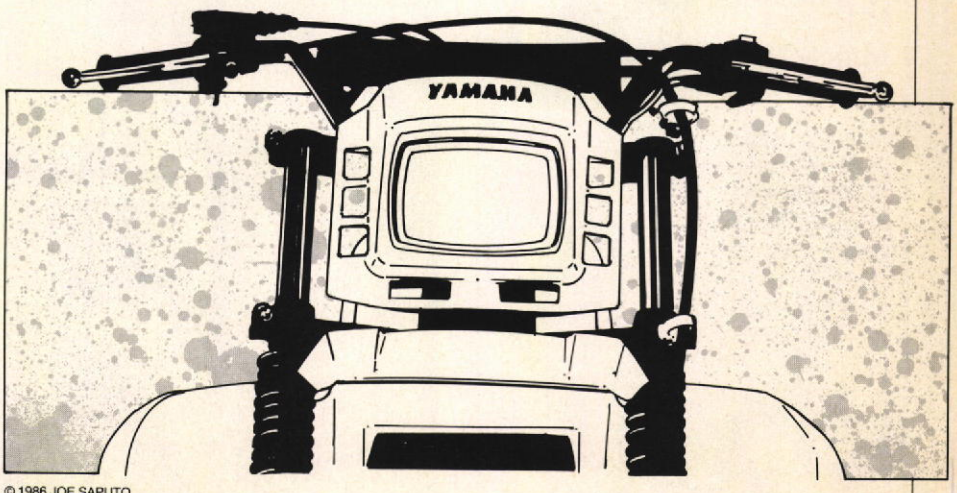
We contacted the manufacturer, Cincinnati Microwave, but the company couldn't supply us with a unit in time for our test—ed.

FINDERS KEEPERS

Well, you've done it again. Last September, you showed me bikes I couldn't have. Now you are the first to show me the BMW K75S; I'll just have to wait.

Then, you tantalize me with the item on page 58 of the December 1985 issue. If only I could be *that* bike in *that* photograph. Sigh. . . .

Richard A. Hauser
Lakewood, Colorado



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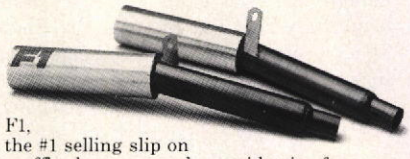

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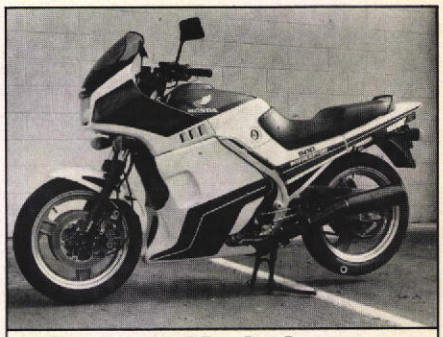

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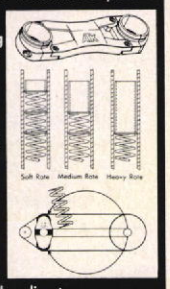

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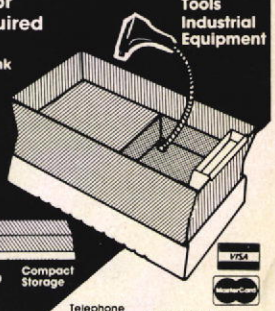

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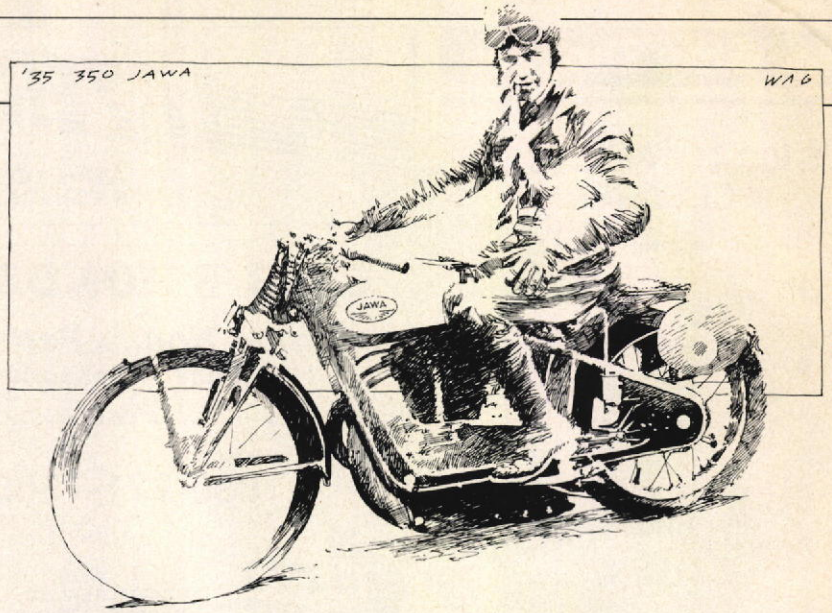

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AMERICAN BEAUTY

Regarding your Christmas Wishlist: Forget the damn mountain bike; where can I get the girl?

Brian P. Quinn
Lubbock, Texas

READER AROUSAL

I'm generally pleased with the quality of your magazine. However, I'm concerned about the direction it appears to be heading. The last two issues included full-blown color pictures of scantily clad women in sexually suggestive poses.

If pornography interested me, I'd subscribe to Playboy or Penthouse. It doesn't, and I don't care to corrupt myself through it. I am asking that you please keep CYCLE GUIDE about motorcycles only, and leave out pictorial references to sex. It would be the professional thing to do. I'd also ask that you inform advertisers to tailor ads around their products, and not on the models they use (abuse?). I would almost guarantee you wouldn't receive letters asking you to return to sexually oriented photographs if such steps were taken.

Michael S. Smith
Wyoming, Minnesota

After all, look what it's done for National Geographic—ed.

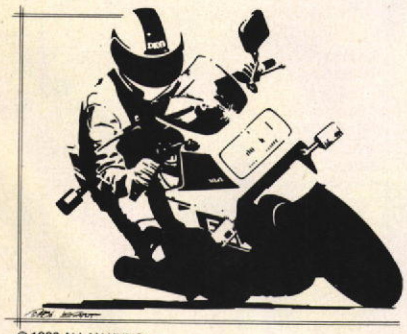
COWARDLY LINES

The 55 Club's ignorance of motorcycling is surpassed only by its cowardice. By not revealing his name, title or club address (September 1985), the writer loses credibility.

Our founding fathers saw freedom of choice as essential, not selfish. I can accept that, "public places should have freedom to deny . . . bikers access." But bike owners should then be exempt from the taxes used to maintain those places.

Stopping serious accidents lies in education, not legislation. Slow speeds only lessen an accident's severity, while the real problem of granting driving privileges to unskilled idiots remains.

Clark Marley
Boulder, Colorado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UNCOMMONLY GOOD

The first time I flipped through the September 1985 issue and saw those beautifully restored Indians, the Black Shadow and the Sportster, I heaved a sigh of relief. Yes, Virginia, real motorcycles do still exist, and the occasional but increasingly rare sight of one is like a breath of fresh air.

Irvin Martin
Orleans, Ontario
Canada

SHADOW-BOXING

I, too, would like to voice my extreme displeasure with the incorrect sundries fitted to the Vincent Black Shadow in your September 1985 issue. However, I can assure Paul Campbell (Letters, December 1985) that the plethora of retrofitted incorrect components on the bastardized Vincent does not include the headlight.

Between and including the taillight and the front tire, there appear to be numerous non-standard items anyone even casually acquainted with the marque can plainly see. Since the taillight is incorrect while the headlight is correct, one can only conclude that Campbell doesn't know the front of a Vincent from the back of one.

Oliver Virta
Brookline, Massachusetts

SETTING IT STRAIGHT?

Good grief! Now people are complaining about stories they haven't even read, like Robert Davis' fine butcher job in the December 1985 Letters.

The vehicle Setright referred to with "the potential to do" and "might conceivably do" was *not* the unmarked police car; it was his bike. Setright has plenty of reason to be proud of his rape analogy. It was true.

I'm not condoning people who thrash through crowded freeways, but please let me go 130 to 140 mph on my bike when I'm on a road and there's not another vehicle for 90 miles. I promise not to fall off and hit you while you sit in your living room and take reading lessons. Speed doesn't kill; mistakes do.

Keith E. Donnelly
Monrovia, California

FREDDIE FAN

I agree there's a long way to go before Freddie Spencer gets the recognition he deserves (Winners & Losers, December 1985). He is not only one of the greatest roadracers, but also one of the finest young men I've ever had the pleasure to meet.

To watch him kneel in a circle of small children signing autographs at the Shreveport Regional Airport is far from chilly. Granted, it was a small reception of about 200, including three local news crews. But Freddie commented he was as impressed had it been 10,000 Europeans. And, Dain, I don't recall seeing you there.

Robert Stoll
Shreveport, Louisiana

Gingerelli was the one standing in the shadows, with a pocketful of candy in his overcoat—ed.

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret we are unable to give personal responses. ●

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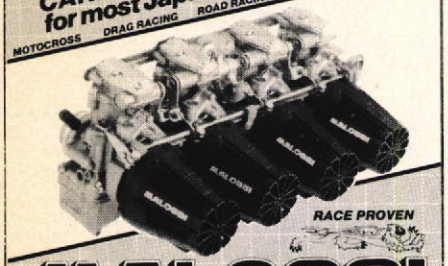

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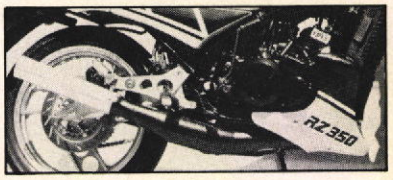

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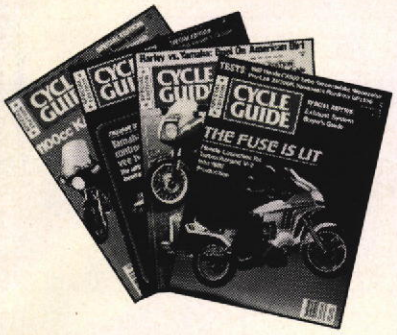

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